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Number 5

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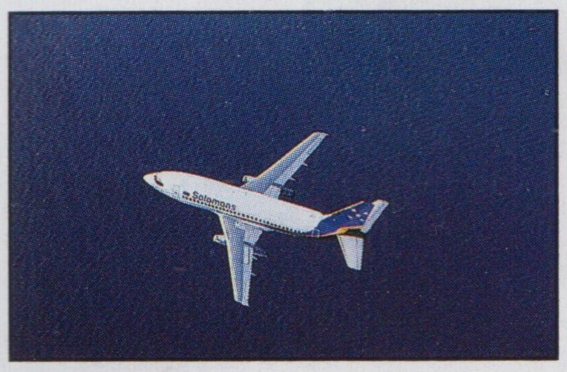

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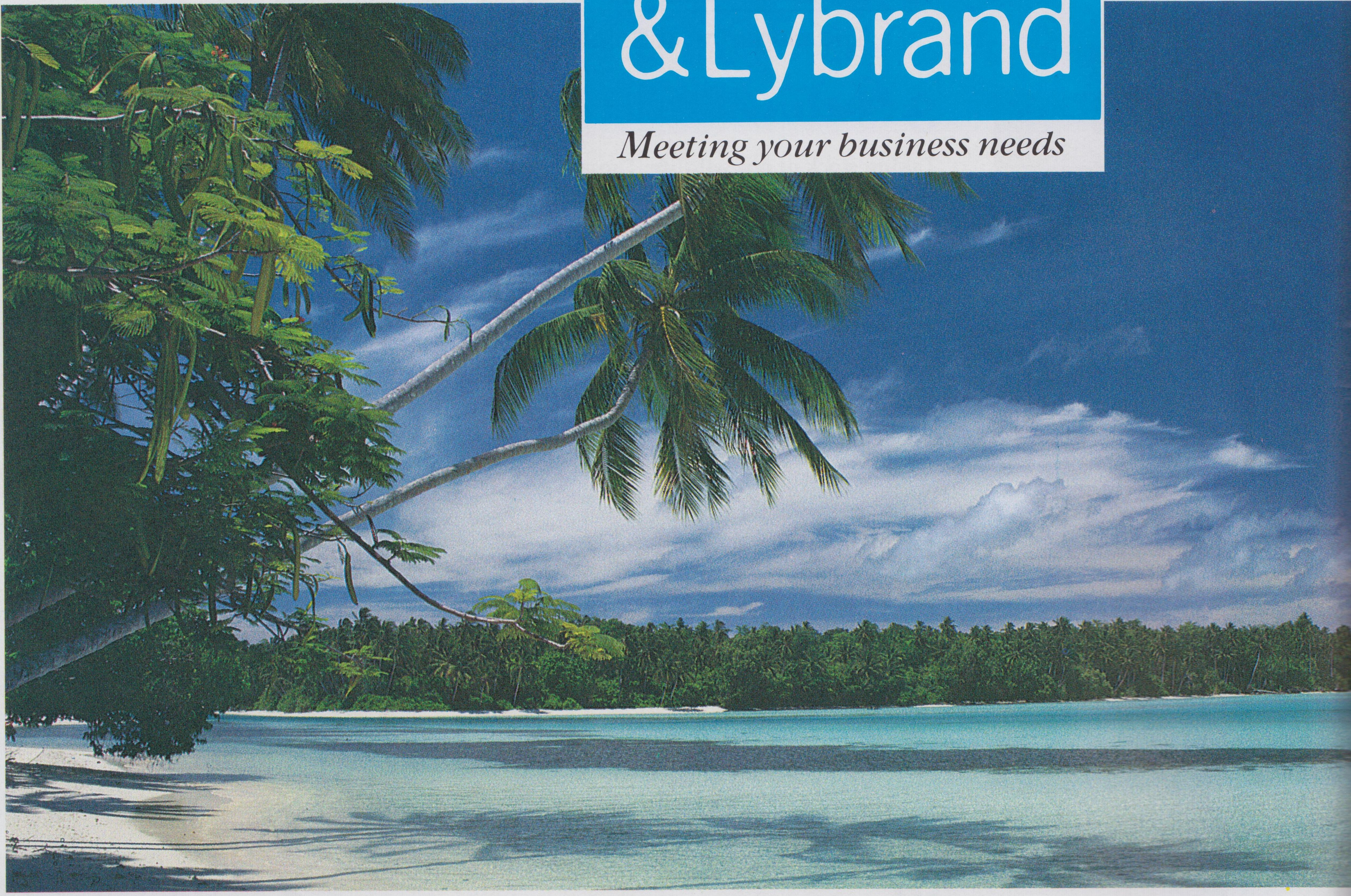

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From the general manager of Solomon Airlines

Our cover captures the exhilaration of a nation intent on nurturing a crucial asset — its national airline.

As this fifth issue of Solomons went to press, Solomon Airlines was intensifying its efforts to lay the foundations of tourism as a cornerstone of the Solomon Islands economy.

November 1990 saw the opening of a second weekly service to New Zealand via Vanuatu with a special joint service relationship being fostered with our Melanesian brother — Air Vanuatu, the national flag carrier of Vanuatu.

In March 1991 we anticipate the opening of a new service to Cairns, the gateway to North Queensland.

This issue consolidates the presence of Solomons as our in-flight magazine, with which we spread our wings to such far away places as England, the United States, Ireland and Canada. The magazine's readers are responding with encouraging compliments.

As a reader of Solomons magazine, enjoy exploring the diversity of the Solomon Islands — an adventure our airline can easily turn into reality for you.

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John Baura
General Manager

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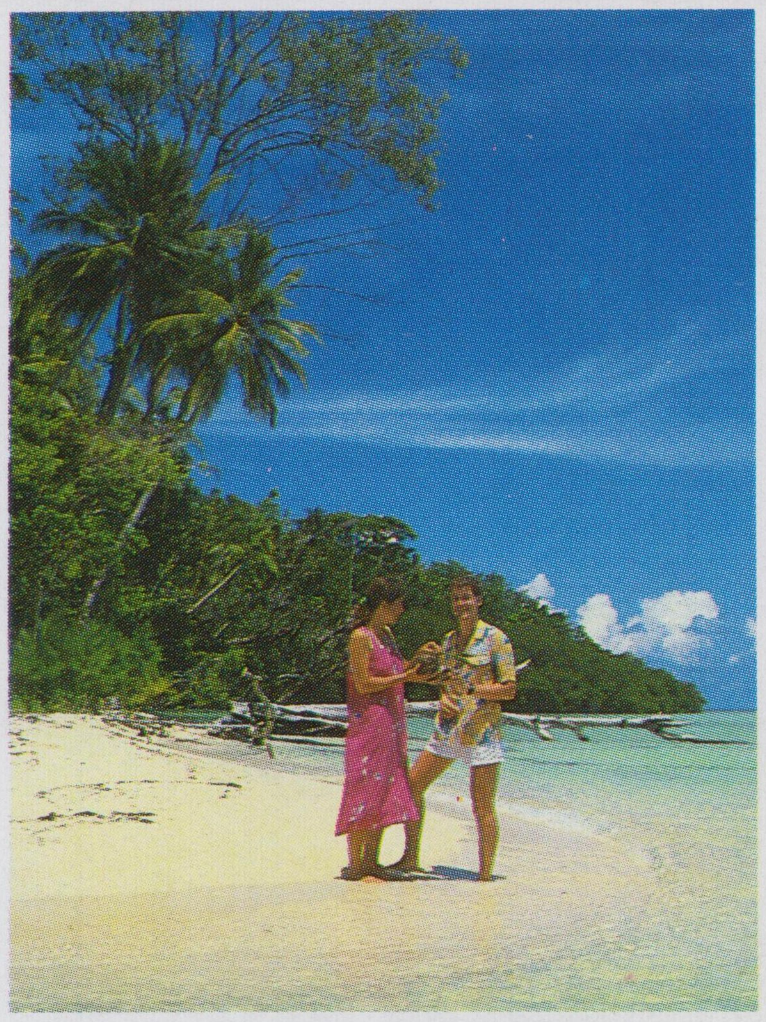

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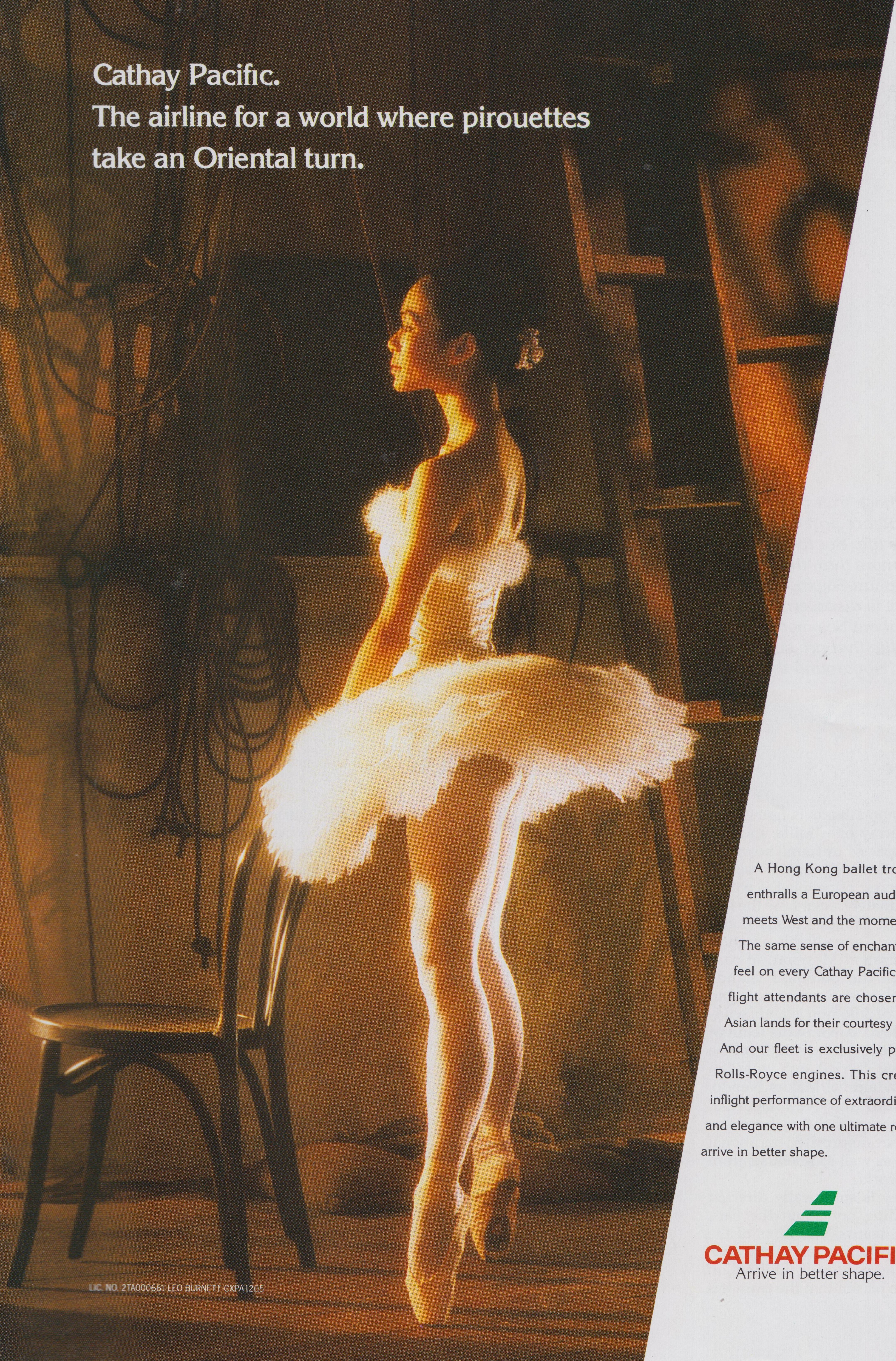
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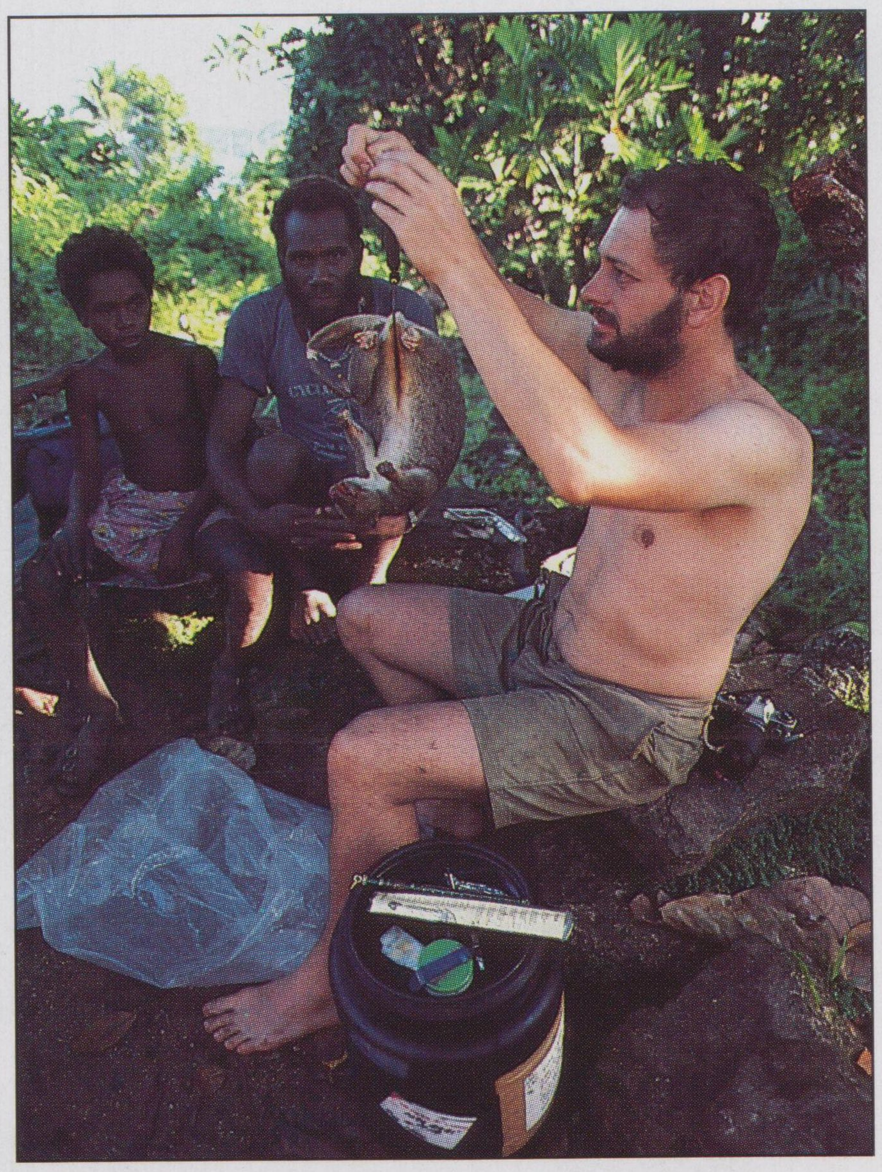
Taking stock of our
WILD LIFE

Words: Tim Flannery
Photos: Mike McCoy

Those fruit bats circling overhead are part of Solomon Islands life. But they may be much more than that. A joint Australian-Solomon Islands project is discovering things about Solomon Islands wildlife that are surprising scientists around the world



The Solomon Islands is home to a spectacular array of wildlife. Indeed, many of the species are found nowhere else, and the few well-known species excite the interest of people the world over. Unfortunately, even now the full diversity of this unique fauna is not known. It was to remedy this situation that the Australian Museum, in conjunction with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Natural Resources, began an inventory of Solomon Islands wildlife in early 1990. Already the team of Australian scientists and staff from the ministry have carried out work on Choiseul, Guadalcanal, Makira, Nendo, Kolombangara, and New Georgia. Some of the things that they have discovered have even surprised traditional landowners, as well as scientists from around the world.

The survey is specifically directed towards finding out about the bats, rats, snakes, lizards, and frogs of the Solomon Islands. The team, however, has also gathered useful information on birds. The reason that the team has concentrated on what is at first glance a rather unglamourous group of beasties is that they are so poorly known. Also, our investigations have shown that there is more to these 'creepy-crawlies' than first meets the eye.

*Photos. **Above:** Dr Tim Flannery, senior research scientist, Australian Museum, Sydney, does field work on Malaita. **Top right:** Prehensile-tailed skink Corucia zebrats, a native of the Solomon Islands. **Bottom right:** Solomons banded snake Loveridgelaps elapoides, another native*

The bats are good example. Every Solomon Islander is familiar with the fruit bats that circle overhead by night and day. Few realise, however, that there are eight species of these 'Flying Fox' (genus *Pteropus*), more indeed than are found anywhere else, and that the Solomon Islands may be the original home of the entire genus. Today Flying Foxes are found from in the Indian Ocean, near the coast of Africa, to the Cook Islands in the Pacific. But it is in the Solomon Islands where they reach their greatest diversity. Here are found among the largest and smallest of the Flying Foxes, and the various kinds specialise either upon eating fruits or nectar. Evolutionary studies have shown that the group might have arisen in the Solomon Islands thousands of years ago, and spread half way around the world since then.

Many other kinds of bats occur in the Solomons. Some such as the tiny insect-eating bent-wing bats occur all the way from Europe to Japan, Australia, and New Caledonia. Other kinds are unique to the Solomons. The rare Solomon Islands flower-nose bat was

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encountered by the team fluttering inside a house on Guadalcanal, while high in the mountains of Guadalcanal they found a species of bat that is entirely new to science. This spectacular bat is one of the Monkey-faced Bats, which are only found in the Solomon Islands and Fiji. It was found in mossy forest at 1200 metres elevation on Mount Makarakomburu. It is a large bat (with a wingspan of around 60cm) and its bright red eyes and black and white mottled wings give it a startling appearance. Its luxuriant black and yellow fur, which hide its ears, are defence against the cold and wet nights that it must regularly endure. A similar, but more lightly furred species, has more recently been found by the team on New Georgia. As with so many of the Solomon Islands animals, the lifestyles and habits of these species remain completely unknown.

The rats of the Solomon Islands also have a few surprises. They are by far the most difficult group to gather information about, for they are rare and secretive. The team's greatest success so far has been the discovery of three species not previously known in the Solomon Islands. These were found on Choiseul. All three were known from Bougainville, where they were last seen some 60 years ago. Their discovery on Choiseul means that they are not extinct, as some had previously thought. Less fortunate however was the research on Guadalcanal undertaken to-discover the three rat species unique to that island. The largest of the three is known as the Emperor Rat, and was last collected near Aola in 1887. It is known as Hue Hue in the language of Gold Ridge, and unfortunately it appears to be extinct. The middle sized (although still large) species is known as the King Rat. Although collected at Gold Ridge, as recently as 1988 our 1990 survey failed to re-find it, and it may also be becoming rare. The smallest of Guadalcanal's rats is known as the Little Pig Rat. It is known from a single specimen collected at Aola in the 1880s, and has not been heard of since. We hope that at some time in the future, a Solomon Islander will take up the task of re-discovering this important part of his heritage — if the great rats survive.

The team's work with reptiles has also produced surprises. Perhaps thankfully no new poisonous snakes have been discovered, but a very large frog found on New Georgia appears to be a new species. The many small lizards have yet to be analysed properly.

As we travel around the Solomons people sometimes ask us what the value of our work is. This is often hard to explain to people who have to work hard all day just to feed their families. We explain that the wildlife of the Solomon Islands is unique. It is an inheritance that should be preserved for future generations. Unfortunately, all too many species, such as the Emperor Rat, now appear to be lost forever. As logging and gardening disturb more forest, it is inevitable that more will be lost — unless we understand how these animals live and make efforts to protect them. The day may not be far off when there are no flying foxes to pollinate the flowers and carry the fruit off so that seedling may grow, and when there are so many people that the wildlife will be pushed out. In order to live well we must plan well. Our wildlife survey adds just a little of the information that will be necessary to our plans for a good life in future.

DAYS OF OUR KNIGHT

Sir Gideon Zoleveke runs a store at Kukum. But this remarkable man has not led the life of an ordinary shopkeeper

Gideon Zoleveke's paddle dug into the dark of the great Vonavona Lagoon. It was late 1943. The invading Japanese were nearly all around him as he paddled his canoe to Sepo Island, off Gizo. He was moving away from the past and from danger, paddling towards more danger and the future.

The immediate future was the building of a bush hideout in which he had his first lessons in caring for the sick and wounded. That led him to work with the Coastwatchers, a behind-the-enemy-lines spy service dedicated to watching Japanese troop movements. Later came medical school, an arduous career as a travelling doctor, and finally to parliament, the Solomons Islands cabinet and a knighthood.

Finally? Sir Gideon Zoleveke's career isn't over yet .

With his wife Melody, the 68-year-old veteran of countless medical-mission treks to the far ends of the Solomon Islands has abandoned medicine and politics for a storekeeper's life. It is a part of his career that, he ruefully admits, is the hardest he's tackled. "It is difficult because of the social obligations. I used to say when people ask me: 'If you've got to run a shop you must become a Chinese before you run it.' That's the first thing. You can't be a Solomon Islander to run a shop. You must be a Chinese. Their rule is family and business are two separate things. I found it very hard. It can be done, but you have to face all these Melanesian social pressures."

Zoleveke is a frontline war veteran. More accurately, he was actually behind the Japanese lines in coastwatching service days. He was a frontline fighter in the still continuing war against malaria, bad sanitation, poor nutrition and other medical ailments plaguing Solomons life on a national scale.

He's a physically small but still fit man with a big past. He's disarmingly modest, with conversation flecked with humour laced with caustic comment. He's a man who thinks that just authority deserves respect. Young people might decide that he's a little old fashioned about that. "In the past, the policy of our forefathers was: Everything you do, do it yourself. The policy these times is: Everything you do, somebody else should do it."

"I can't forget the British for the way they brought law and order, which I hope we can keep today. But I was looking at some young doctors the other day. They were not dressed

Right: *Sir Gideon Zoleveke ... a storekeeper with a past*

Adventures in Paradise..

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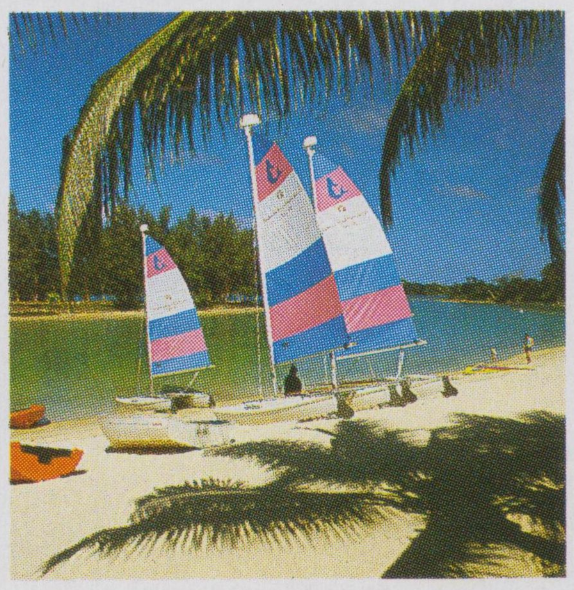

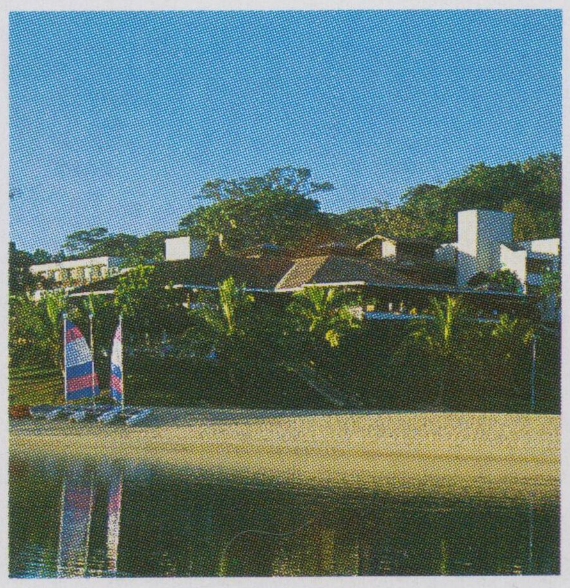

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normally. We used to dress in our white medical gowns and things every day. Now they wear anything, sports shirts and you go to the reception they are chewing betel nut in the office, which was not in our time. The British appreciated the quality of respect; respect for who is boss or who is the government."

Gideon Zoleveke was born in 1922 at Paqoe village on the eastern end of Choiseul Island. Just a year earlier the last of the island's long, fierce clan wars had been fought and permanently settled with a peace treaty. Zoleveke's schooling began at the age of 10 but he preferred fishing, canoe-building and toiling in food gardens. It wasn't until his encounter with an exceptional teacher, Job Rotoava, that young Zoleveke, at the age of 15, caught the education bug. He and a friend, Manassah Sirikau, were selected by their local church committee to attend Sasamuqa Central School, on the other side of Choiseul. Travelling in a newly-built traditional war canoe, it took the boys a week to get there.

In 1939, he was selected to attend a pastoral training college at Munda, New Georgia, in 1940. That meant a trip to Gizo, the first town seen by young Zoleveke, who also saw his first steamship. At the Munda college so much time was spent working in food gardens and keeping a copra drier burning that Zoleveke wondered how he passed exams.

In 1941, Zoleveke passed an examination and was chosen to attend the Central Medical School in Fiji. War intruded. By then Japanese troops had already occupied Tulagi, seat of the then British colonial government. It was not until 1945 that he reached Suva. As the Japanese spread towards Munda and Gizo villages, mission station and government activity dissolved. But it was the machine-gunning of the mission school by two American fighters that brought Zoleveke his first direct taste of war.

The Japanese arrived at Munda at last, in five ships, in November 1942. Zoleveke and his companions moved mission medical supplies and stores into jungle hideouts. It was in one of these that Zoleveke was taught the use of syringes and needles and how to dress ulcers, mix medicine, and administer drugs. By this time he and a cousin, Abel Virua, had made a dangerous canoe passage to Sepo. From there, working under the direction of Abel, a trained medical dresser, he spent months travelling by canoe and by foot carrying a fragile medical service to villages of Vella Lavela. The arrival of Henry Josselyn, an Australian naval lieutenant, led to Zoleveke's membership of the Solomon Islands Defence Force, attached to the coastwatchers to care for their and local village health.

The coastwatching service put him in the front seat for viewing fierce naval and air battles between the Americans and Japanese. "Warships fought and chased one another on the open seas, but it was the air battles which were the most spectacular to watch, as burning planes and parachutists fell from the sky," he recalled. Wounded American and New Zealand airmen came under his care. At Barakoma he watched American Marines slaughter survivors from three sunk Japanese warships. "Many of the Japanese had no weapon and were exhausted after hours in the water, but all were killed. I was personally involved in such incidents and saw some of the terrible things which human beings are capable."

The Solomons war began winding up. In mid-1944, Zoleveke was told he was being sent at last to medical school in Fiji. But first he was enrolled at a famous Fijian education institution, Queen Victoria School, where in early 1945 at the age of 22 he arrived to be prepared for the medical school. All his previous schooling had been in the dialects of Roviana or Choiseul. His only English was what he had picked up from Allied troops.

Two years at Queen Victoria School was a struggle for the young man from Choiseul. But a triumphant one. In February 1947, the 24-year-old Zoleveke began classes at the Central Medical School, a simple but fascinating institution in which he delved into the mysteries of medicine with students from 15 other Pacific Island countries. One hostel was for Polynesians and another for Melanesians. "It was like hell, especially among my Melanesian friends. For many students drinking and girl-hunting were the chief occupations. The Fijians in particular would bring in their partners and make noises at all hours, regardless of whether it was a weekend or working day. I thought this was wonderful at first, but then I remembered my headmaster's warning ('Son, when you go to medical school next year, you will find you are surrounded by temptation.')". Young Zoleveke survived. He became the life-long friend of boisterous Fijians who today are respectable leaders of their profession.

His graduation in November 1950 led him to a career of 23 dedicated years as a practitioner of medicine in every Solomon Islands province. The early days of marriage brought tragedy to the Zolevekes. Their first child, a son, lived for barely five weeks before dying of cerebral malaria.

Zoleveke spent 1961 studying health education at London University and seeing something of Europe — all on a salary of 46 pounds a month. The 1960s brought the Zolevekes more children — three boys and three girls, one of them adopted. As the 1970s opened Zoleveke found himself deskbound — a bureaucrat rather than a doctor.

Frustrations with the lack of money for health education and the attitude of expatriate officers grew. One morning in 1973 he stood in his office "looking at all my touring gear stacked in the corner and decided that my services were no longer required. It had been almost 12 months since I had been able to do a real job." He resigned his civil service job and a few months later was easily elected to the legislative council as member for Choiseul.

That was the beginning of a political career. He became the first chairman of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate's governing council — the forerunner of the modern cabinet. Later political years brought him the ministerial portfolios of public works, home affairs, education, communications, agriculture, and of course health. As he had broken with medicine, Zoleveke broke with politics. He was the founding president of the United Party in 1977 but in the following year, independence year for the Solomon Islands, he decided against standing for parliament again.

Zoleveke, Sir Gideon as he became in 1983, has run his store at Kukum since 1985. "My hobby is writing, mainly about my tribes." From time to time he's recalled to Choiseul to attend to his responsibilities, usually settling disputes, as head of the thousand-strong Kimbi-Sopere tribe. Sir Gideon began recording Choiseul genealogies almost from the time he learnt to write. His records date back 35 generations — about 700 years. "I'm really just a tribal caretaker," explains this gently-spoken man. "I became leader in 1954 after the traditional chief decided that only I had the genealogical knowledge to settle boundary and fishing disputes."

Sir Gideon Zoleveke frets about the modern state of Solomons Islands society and its future. "As Melanesians we've been a socialist society. It has become, we'd better call it a capitalist society. How can you solve problems which are out of control now? We will have to follow one way or another. The leadership must be of those who think in one way, thinking in the same way. This really will be a test for our culture.'

RACE TO THE Games

This year's South Pacific Games in Port Moresby and Lae will be the largest gathering of Pacific Islanders yet. The Solomon Islands plans to be there.

Report: Robert Keith-Reid

Wanted: About $400,000. That's the estimated cost of despatching a team of a record 200 athletes and officials to the 9th South Pacific Games, to be held in Papua New Guinea in September. Fund raising has been underway since September. The Government will contribute $60,000, says team general manager David Campbell. The balance — a massive challenge given difficult economic times for the country — is dependent on sports administrators and the generosity of sponsors and donors.

Costs include a $US30 a day charge per competitor set by the Papua New Guinea Games committee for food, accommodation, and local transport. Plus there's the cost of flying the team to Papua New Guinea aboard *Guadalcanal*, the Solomon Airlines Boeing 737 jet. "We're hoping the government will agree to allow a tax deduction for donations to our games fund, in line with what the Papua New Guinea government is allowing," says Campbell. "We've had indications of help for a number of sponsors, and it will help us enormously if they agree to provide items like uniforms and equipment."

Soccer and boxing events featuring visiting teams from Papua New Guinea and Australia have raised some money already. Other money-raising ideas are for more invitation sports events, dances, a ball, a telethon, and entertainment shows. One might feature a farewell appearance by Australian country and western singer Slim Dusty, who is certain to draw a big audience.

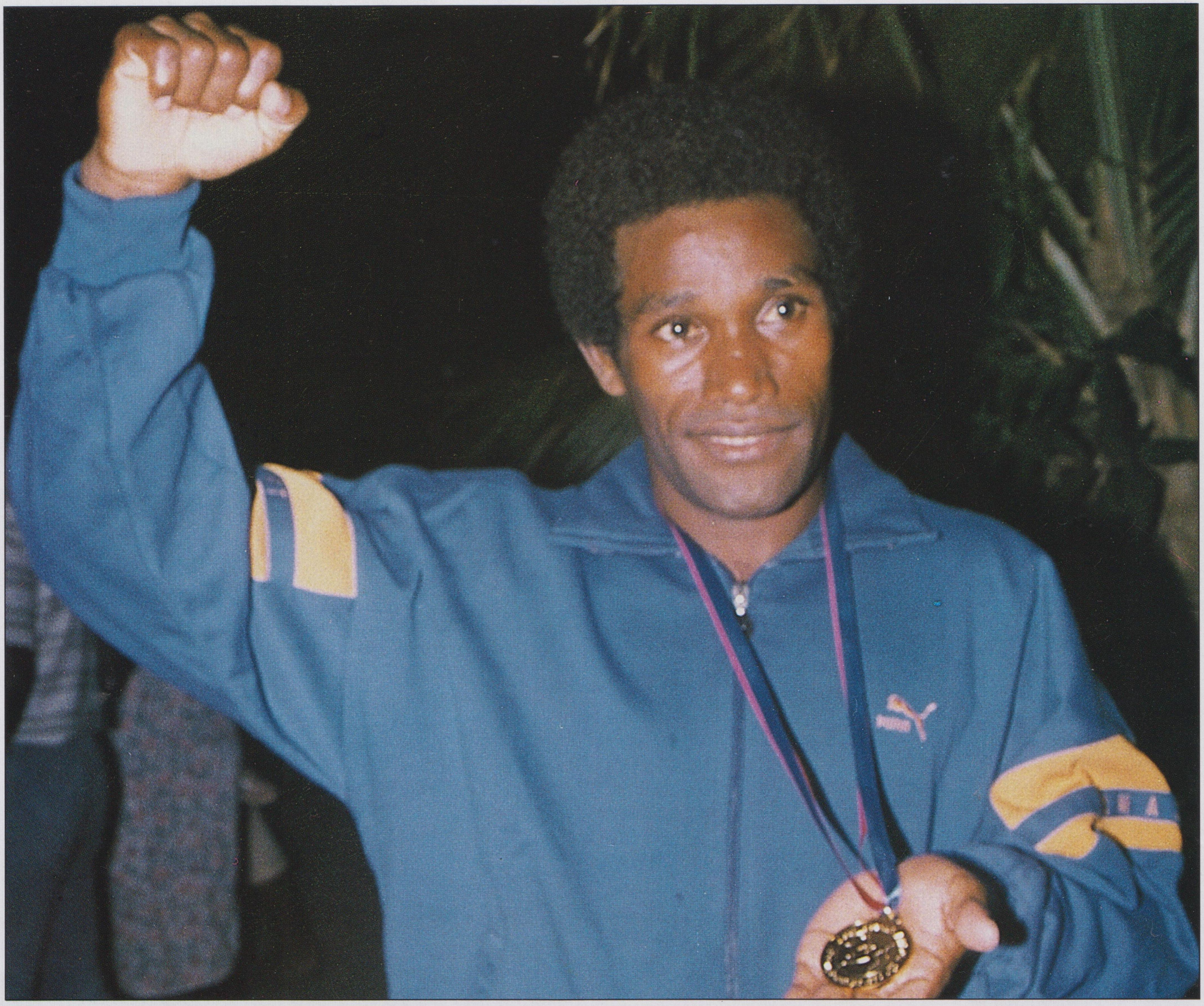
The Solomons team will join about 3000 other athletes and officials from 20 other Pacific Island countries and territories in what is being rated as the greatest gathering of Pacific Islanders. Except for the 1987 Games at Noumea, New Caledonia, which were boycotted by the Solomon Islands and some other countries because of the risk of political violence there at that time, the Solomons has always been a strong games participant. But the cost of getting a team to venues as far away as Tahiti, for the 1971 games, and Guam, for the 1975 games, has been a heavy burden for Solomon Islanders and other small countries. Organised sport is often still a comparatively fragile institution and limited income equates with simple lifestyles.

Solomon Islanders are likely to participate in South Pacific Games soccer, boxing, athletics, weightlifting, and various team sports. At past games they've usually managed to pick up several gold medals and rather more silvers and bronzes. Soccer is the national Solomons passion, played with dash and fire throughout the land. Most other sports tend to be centred on the capital, Honiara, where Lawson Tama, the national sports centre on the outskirts of town, is the scene of soccer and rugby duels.

Boxing is strong in Honiara and the Western Province. But except for a scattering of tennis courts in some provincial centres, other sports are restricted to Honiara. These include basketball, netball, squash, golf, sailing, cricket, and the latest arrival, softball, which has become popular in the past one or two years.

Training for the games is intensifying. "We have some good distance athletes. Suddenly, we have some who appear to win three golds and a silver," says David Campbell, who as a rugby player helped win a bronze for the Solomons at the 1969 games. He managed the national team at the last Fiji games, was the manager designated for the Noumea games, and managed the team to the last Mini South Pacific Games, in Tonga.

Preparations for Papua New Guinea Games are under the auspices of the Solomon Islands National Olympic Committee. Brown Sela, president of the Solomon Islands Sports Association, says that since official support for



Joseph Onika

Joseph Onika began running while hunting for wild pigs in the bush near Longgu village in the Guadalcanal province of the Solomon Islands. “It became a sport of our own, hunting wild pigs," he recalls. "You could rarely catch them at start, but they always were good fun and something to run for. Most of us started the same way, running while hunting wild pigs.”

Onika, now 25 years old, won a gold and a silver medal at the Oceania athletics championships in the Fiji capital, Suva, last year. He is one of the best Solomon Islands medal prospects in this year's South Pacific Games in Papua New Guinea.

At high school Onika ran in everything from sprints to long-distance races. But his school athletics career ended abruptly in 1985 when he was expelled “for spending too much time on sports and not enough on work”. So in 1986 he joined the premier soccer club, Kossa. After a couple of years of soccer “I decided that I should start athletics in our club. Before this time the Kossa club was only known for softball, soccer, basketball, netball and cricket, off course. Everyone here plays soccer or cricket, even the prime minister does.” Onika got an immediate response, with women and girls joining his athletics club too. He and his Kossa club have become a major force in local competition. Onika, an accounts assistant at the Mendana Hotel for the past four years, now stages a regular athletics competition in Honiara and five other clubs have emerged.

His first major international exposure came in 1989 at the mini South Pacific Games in Tonga. The mini Games are held every four years in nations and territories which do not have the facilities to stage the main games. Fourteen countries and territories sent teams to Tonga.

Onika finished fourth in the 100 and 200 metres and gained valuable experience. His best time was 11.46 seconds in the 100 metres semifinal. "I took some ideas from the Tonga games, as to how they run in big competitions, how they warm up and they psyche themselves up," he said. He returned to Honiara and improved his 100 metres timing to 10.8 seconds. At the Oceania championships he brought it down to 10.7 seconds. In Port Moresby, he's aiming for even better.

Kossa club athletes in the Solomons team at the 1990 Oceania championships

sport had "low priority" with "minimal" funds, most sports rely on direct cash subsides from beer and tobacco manufacturers and a fishing company. Even in Honiara there's intense competitive pressure between sport organisations for time on the ground at Lawson Tama, where soccer normally dominates.

Track and field athletics are strongest in primary schools, which last year produced two representatives for the Children's Olympics in Australia. The sports association hopes to have sport accepted as a part of the formal Solomon Islands school curriculum and is discussing this proposition with the Ministry of Education.

The South Pacific Games occur in four-year cycles. The 9th Games will be held from September 7 to 21 in the cities of Port Moresby and Lae. Papua New Guinea's government has made a grant of Kina 3.7 million (about $US3.8 million) and is allowing private contributors a double tax deduction. Private sponsorship has so far yielded about Kina 10 million ($US10.1 million). More than Kina 40 million worth of facilities are installed. At Lae, a Kina 16 million indoor and outdoor complex is under construction and a Kina 12 million stadium is being built at Port Moresby. On September 7, all 3000 athletes and officials will attend the opening ceremony at Port Moresby and then split up, with 11 sports there and seven at Lae. The Solomon Islands is working to be there — in force.

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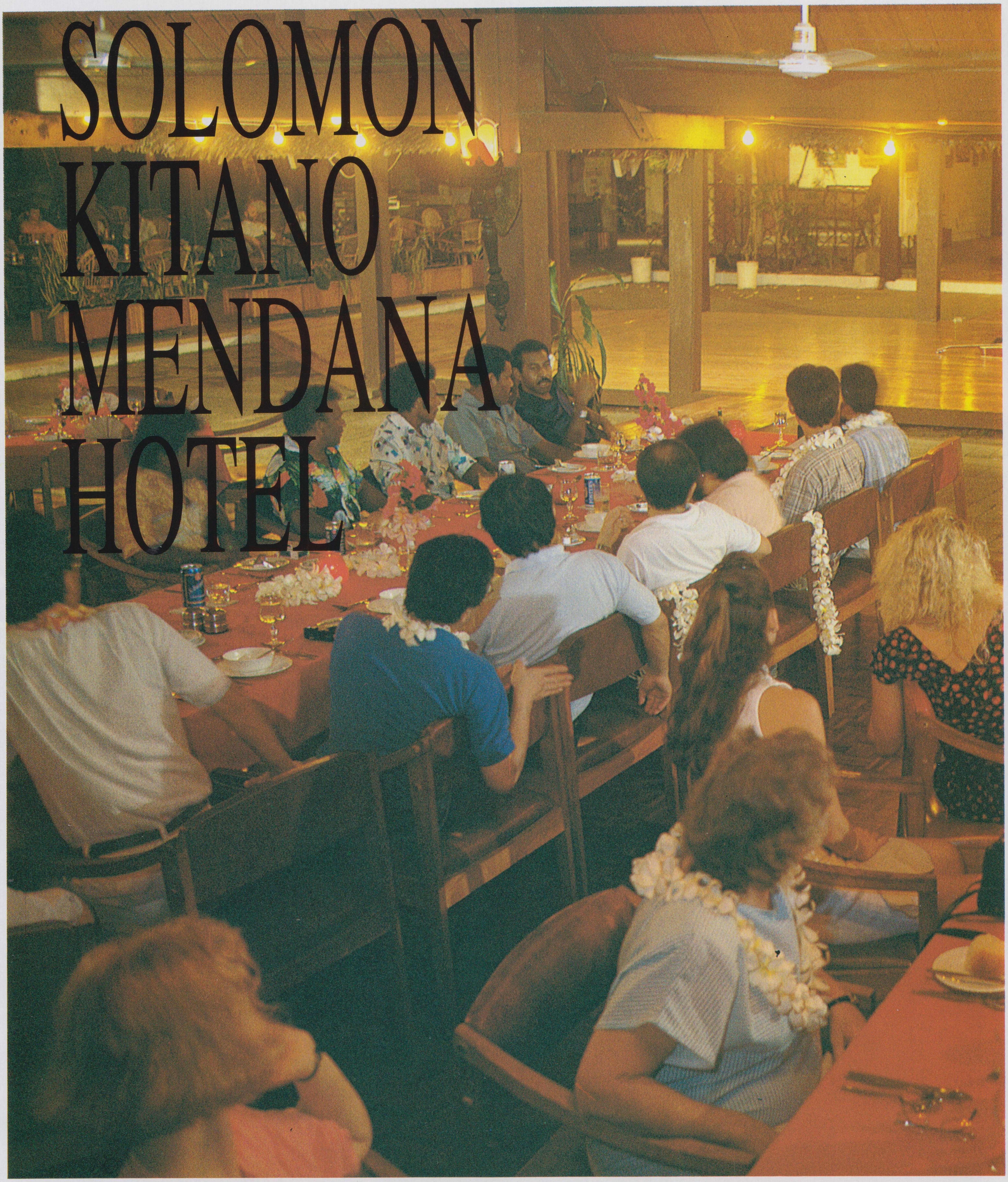
SOLOMON KITANO MENDANA HOTEL



Advertising feature

For entertainment it offers shops, an international speciality restaurant, evening cocktails, barbecues and, performances by island dancing and cultural groups with natural Pacific hospitality

Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel

Kitano: a name that means welcome to the Solomons

Kitano, a leader of Japan's construction industry, has a new role as keeper of the gateway to the Solomon Islands.

In partnership with the Solomon Islands Government, it has taken a controlling interest in the 100-room Mendana Hotel, the largest hotel in the Solomons, set on the shore in the centre of Honiara, the national capital.

Since 1982, Kitano's construction teams have put their mark in the Solomons with the creation of a fish cannery town of Noro on the island of New Georgia, and the construction of a Japanese aid-funded malaria medical research institute at Honiara.

Now, with its move into the hotel, Kitano has made a yet more meaningful commitment to this island nation of more than 300,000 Melanesian people.

Renamed as the Solomon Kitano Mendana, the hotel is being refurbished and upgraded to confirm and maintain its role as the premier gateway to the 800 islands of the Solomon archipelago. "We are now refurbishing the guest rooms, restaurant and public facilities including electrical and mechanical facilities," says Tatsuya Matsui, director and general manager of Solomon Kitano. "We are upgrading secretarial services and meeting rooms."

Set on a sandy beach two minutes from the centre of Honiara and 15 minutes form the international airport, the Solomon Mendana is named after Alvaro de Mendana, the Spanish explorer who in the 16th century became the first Westerner to see the Solomon Islands.

The hotel's status makes it Honiara's first social centre, the automatic accommodation for visiting businessmen and government officials. And for many tourists it their first introduction to Solomon

Islands hospitality as they prepare to embark on diving and fishing expeditions or stay for a night on their way to an outer island resort.

For the travelling business or professional man, the Solomon Kitano Mendana offers close access to Honiara's government and business offices, together with conference facilities, ISD direct telephone links with the outside world, and photocopy, telex, and fax services.

And for entertainment it offers shops, an international speciality restaurant, evening cocktails, barbecues and, performances by island dancing and cultural groups with natural Pacific hospitality.

Solomon Kitano Mendana's great open terrace bar, just a few steps from the beach, is one of the crossroads of the South Pacific. Swimming, diving, snorkelling, golf and squash are other entertainment easily accessible from this gateway to the unspoilt natural splendour of the Solomon Islands.

General Manager Matsui says the future of the hotel will be to continue to be primarily a centre for business travellers. However, Kitano representatives have inspected several fine beach locations along the coast of the island of Guadalcanal, on which Honiara is located, to assess prospects for possible eventual investment in a large beach resort hotel.

Swimming, diving, snorkelling, golf and squash are other entertainment easily accessible

Kitano is likely to become involved in other Pacific Islands hotel projects, says Matsui, mentioning the islands of Palau, Ponape, and Yap in the Micronesian part of the region.

日本の建設会社、キタノ建設はソロモン諸島への扉を開く新しい鍵を握っている。

同社はソロモン諸島政府との合併で、首都ホニアラの中心地の浜辺に建つ、ソロモン最大のホテル、メンダナホテル（客室数101室）の80%の株を所有し、ホテル経営を行っている。

1982年以来、キタノ建設グループは、ニュージョージア島ノロの魚缶詰業の町をつくったことや、ホニアラに日本基金によるマラリア医学研究所を設立したことなどで、ソロモン諸島でよく知られるようになった。今やホテル業にも進出し、キタノ建設は30万のメラネシア人の国にとって、より意味の深い貢献をしている。

ソロモン・キタノ・メンダナホテルと名称も改め、同ホテルは、グレードアップされ、ソロモン諸島の主たる玄関口の役目をもつ。

「今、我々は客室、レストラン、電気、機器、オーバーホール器械設備を含めた公共設備を新しくし、カーペットやカーテンも新しく取り替えているところです」ソロモン・キタノ支配人マツイ・タツヤ氏は言う。

「事務サービスと客室のアップド計画を図っています」

国際空港から15分、ホニアラの中心地から2分の、砂浜に建つこのソロモン・メンダナホテルはスペインの探検家、アルバロ・デ・メンダナにちなんで名付けられた。彼は16世紀の探検家で、ソロモン諸島を最初に発見した西洋人である。

ホテルの位置からしても、メンダナホテルは社交の中心である。ビジネスマン、政府の役人、観光客にとっても便利な宿泊地である。ダイビングや魚釣りにでかけたり、他の島のリゾートに訪れる前に一泊する予定なら、このホテルでソロモン諸島のホスピタリティーを味あう最初の機会となるだろう。

観光業のビジネスマンやプロフェッショナルな仕事をもつ人達にとって、キタノ・メンダナホテルはホニアラ政府、ビジネス街へもとても近く、ホテル内には会議室も用意されている。また、ＩＳＤ国際直通電話、コピー、テレックス、ファックス等のサービスも用意されている。さらに、各種サービス・ショッ

プ、世界のレストラン、カクテルバー、バーベキュー、太平洋のホスピタリティーでいっぱいのソロモン諸島のダンスショーなども、このホテルで楽しめる。

ビーチ際のソロモン・キタノ・メンダナホテルの大きな屋外のテラスバーは、南太平洋の十字路である。ソロモン諸島のすばらしい自然の中で、スイミング、スノーケリング、ゴルフ、そしてスカッシュなども、このホテル近くで簡単に楽しむことができる。

マツイ支配人は、今後も、同ホテルは商用旅行者の中心となり続けるだろう、と言っている。一方、キタノ建設の代表者は、大きなビーチ・リゾートホテルに今後の投資を期待して、ホニアラのあるガダルカナル島海岸沿いの美しい場所を調査している。

キタノ建設はおそらく、ミクロネシアのパラウ、ポナペ、ヤップ島など、他の太平洋諸島のホテル・プロジェクトにも進出するだろう、とマツイ支配人は語る。

MENDANA

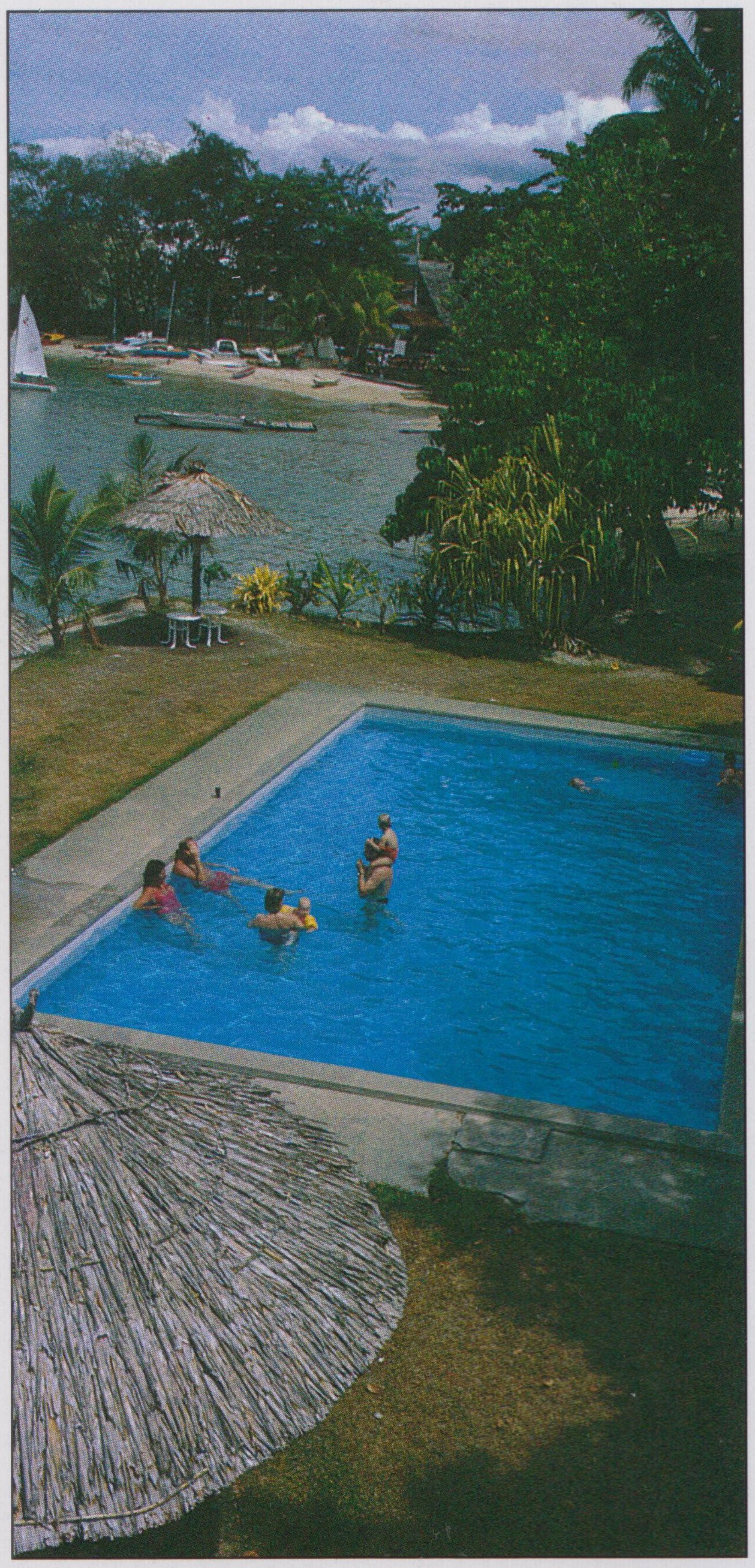
ソロモン諸島東部のどこかの島にアルバロ・デ・メンダナの骨が今も眠っている。1568年初頭、スペインの探検家メンダナは西洋人として初めてこの島々を発見した。彼は、中近東の王ソロモンにちなんでこの島をソロモン諸島と名付けた。彼はソロモン王の金の財宝がこの地に隠されていることを信じていたのである。

ヤスベイ大島に上陸しても、メンダナは金の財宝を発見できなかった。ソロモン諸島で最初の金が発見されたのは、それから400年後だった。彼の部下は礁湖を探検するために小さな帆船を作った。スペインの南米植民地から彼らが使用していた大きな船で探検するのは危険だったからである。

メンダナは島々にスペイン語の名を付けたが、今でもその名が使われている。ガダルカナル島でメンダナの仲間は土着民の争いに巻き込まれ、9人の船員全員が殺された。その報復として、スペイン人は見つけたすべてのガダルカナル島の村に火を付けた。

メンダナは1568年に南米に帰った。27年後の1594年メンダナはソロモン諸島に戻ってきた。群島のうちで最東に位置するサンタクールズ島のネンドに上陸したが、病気になり、まもなく亡くなった。彼がどこに埋葬されたかは誰も知らない。

Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel



Special link with the Solomons

Tsuguto Kitano, founder and head of Kitano Construction, has a special link with the Solomon Islands, a country in which his company has been active since 1982.

The close relationship he formed with Solomon Islands leaders on his visits to Honiara led to recognition by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Tokyo of his appointment by the Solomons Foreign Minister, Sir Baddeley Devesi, as the country's honorary consul in Tokyo.

Since its foundation in 1946, Kitano has spread its business from Japan to the completion of important construction contracts in more than a dozen other countries.

Notable contracts are the building in Hawaii of a replica of the 11th century temple at Uji, just south of Kyoto. Kitano is one of the very few firms in Japan with the expertise to handle the complexities of traditional Japanese architecture by blending state-of-the-art construction technology with active concern for aesthetic values.

Elsewhere in the world, Kitano has built ports, factories, apartments, a prestige bank, highways, world exposition buildings, and airport facilities.

The purchase and redevelopment of the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel is the corporation's second acquisition of a hotel property. Since 1973 the company has owned and operated the New York Hotel Kitano, whose management has advised in improvements to the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel.

"Tomorrow is filled with opportunity," is the philosophy expressed by founder Tsuguto Kitano. "Our technology goes where the challenges are. We pride ourselves on harmonious blending of both form and function in everything we do. We listen to our environment and we answer thoughtfully. Outside the country, as at home, we are building for tomorrow. We're organised around people's needs. So we're always trying to expand our understanding of the lifestyles, customs and traditions of our host countries."

Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel

キタノ建設の会長、キタノ・ツグト氏は、1982年にソロモン諸島で事業を初めて以来この国とは深いつながりがある。

ホニアラを訪れる際に、ソロモン諸島のリーダーたちと親交があることから、今年、ソロモン諸島外務大臣サー・バッドレー・デヴェシが彼を名誉領事として任命し、東京の外務省より表彰されることとなった。

1946年の会社設立以来、キタノ建設は日本国内だけでなく、数十ヵ国の国々で活躍している。有名な事業は、京都の南、宇治にある11世紀に建てられた平等院の複製をハワイに建てたことである。キタノ建設は、美的感覚に基づいた日本の伝統建築と現代の建設技術の複合を専門とした、日本で数少ない社会である。その他、キタノ建設は海外でホテル、病院、博物館、学校、工場、アパートメント、有名銀行、港、高速道路、万国博覧会ビル、空港ビルなどを建設している。

ソロモン・キタノ・メンダナホテルの購入と改装は、会社としては2度目のホテル不動産購入であった。1973年以来、キタノ建設はニューヨーク・ホテル・キタノを所有、経営している。そして、ニューヨーク・ホテル・キタノの管理者がソロモン・キタノ・メンダナホテル改装をアドバイスしたのである。

「チャンスに満ちた未来」が創立者キタノ・ツグト氏の哲学である。「我々の技術はチャレンジとともにある。我々は、我々の建築のかたちと機能の調和に誇りを持っている。まわりの環境を変え、それに思いやりをもって応える」

「海外でも国内でも、我々は明日のために建設する。人々の必要に応えるために計画を立てる。そして、我々はその国々の生活様式、習慣、伝統などに対する理解を広げる努力をこれからも続けて行くだろう」

A setting that will develop

Solomon Kitano has one of Oceania's largest, most culturally diverse, and potentially wealthy countries as the setting for its first hotel investment in the region — the Solomon Kitano Mendana. About 1200 kilometres long by 600 kilometres wide, the Solomon Islands archipelago is a thickly forested and mountainous land of more than 800 islands. There are 27,556 square kilometres of land. Its system of coral reefs extend from some of the world's largest tropical lagoons. These are full of mainly uninhabited islands and team with fish. They are resources still little touched or explored.

Several volcanoes are still active in these islands, but the majority of majestically-peaked islands are a natural haven for thousands of plant, insect and animal species still not well known to science. Solomon Islanders are a Melanesian race who entered these islands from the direction of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia at least 6000, and perhaps 20,000 or more, years ago. While the country has been an independent nation since 1978, its 300,000 citizens have many cultural differences and use about 100 different languages. They can converse with each other only by using English or Pidgin.

Tourism is still only a minor industry, with perhaps not more than 6000 visitors who can be classed as tourists reaching the Solomon Islands each year. From the Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel it is possible to fly to more than 20 outer island destinations by domestic airline flights. But so far only three other regions can offer modest accommodation for those off-the track travellers who want to adventure into the wilds of the country.

Diving coral reefs and war wrecks, bush walks, the observation of wild life, the diversity of Melanesian culture, fishing and exploration of the relics of some of the great battle ground of the Pacific theatre of the Second World War are attractions awaiting discovery by visitors. The limited exploitation as sailing, cruising, diving and fishing grounds of the huge, virtually untouched lagoons is an obvious form of future development.

キタノはオセアニア最大の、文化的にも多様性を持つこの国、この地帯、ソロモンで最初のホテル投資を始めた。それがソロモン・キタノ・メンダナホテルである。

長さ約1200キロ、幅600キロのソロモン諸島は、国土27，556平方キロの山と森林の900以上の島からなる。珊瑚礁は世界でも最大の熱帯珊瑚からできている。無人島もたくさんあり、魚も多い。まだ発見されていない資源も地中に眠ったままである。

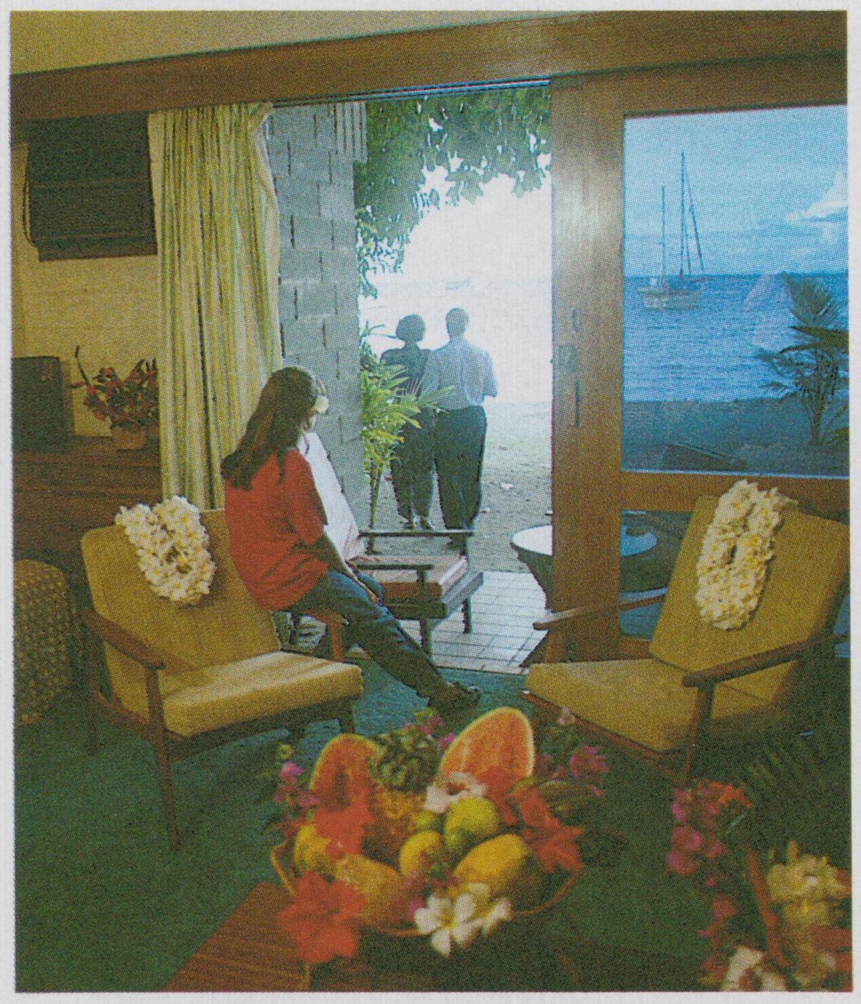
これからの島々には、今も幾つかの活火山があるが、雄大な島の山々の多くは、科学的にまだあまり知られていない、何千もの種類の動植物、昆虫の大国である。ソロモン諸島の人々は6千年から2万年前にパプア・ニューギニアやインドネシア方面から渡って来たメラネシア人種である。1978年に独立、人口30万人の国民は多様な文化を持ち言語は約100種類。お互いの会話には、英語あるいはピジョン・イングリッシュを使っている。

ソロモン諸島は、多量の熱帯広葉樹の木材、コプラ、ココナッツ・オイル、パーム・オイル、ココア、カツオ、カツオ缶詰などを輸出している。比較的大きな国土であるが、島の多くは赤道近くに集中しているので、この海洋条件により、この国は世界最大のカツオの漁場となっている。科学者の調査によれば、年間10万トンのカツオを漁獲しても、問題はないそうである。今のところ、キタノ建設が建設を終了した漁港、缶詰の町、ノロでその約半分の量が漁獲され、缶詰にされている。

ニッケル、ボーキサイト、リン酸鉱物そして金などの鉱物が発見されているが、今の段階では金だけが、将来有望な経済価値をもつ。まもなく開かれる大金鉱のあるガダルカナル島の中心地では蒸気から少量の金をパンニングする。

この国の将来は、農業、漁業、そして林業にかかっていると言えるようだ。また、トロピカル・フルーツ、あるいは野菜の輸出の可能性もある。

when in the Solomons.... we take care of you...!



Sitting right on the ocean front, just 15 minutes from Henderson Airport and two minutes away from the main shopping centres is the Solomon's premier hotel, the Solomon Kitano Mendana.

90 Deluxe rooms, service shops, international speciality restaurant, evening cocktails, barbecues and entertainment groups give you premier service with natural pacific hospitality.

We have tours, diving, snorkelling, fishing, golf and squash to keep even the most active occupied.

For those of you on business we offer conference facilities, ISD direct dial, photocopy, telex and fax services.

And those who just want to get away from it all can sit in the cool of our open terrace bar and watch the world go by.

So when you're in the Solomons let us take care of you.

Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel

PO BOX 384, MENDANA AVENUE, HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS.
TELEPHONE: 20071 / 22285. TELEX: HQ 66315. FACSIMILE: (677) 23942.

SOLOMON ISLANDS

Your information guide

- **Climate:** Tropically warm and humid with coastal day temperatures averaging 28C. April to November tends to be drier, and November to April wetter.
- **What To Wear:** Light and casual. Keep brief beach wear for beaches.
- **Immigration:** Commonwealth, United States, and most West European visitors do not need holiday visas but need return or onward tickets. People intending to work must have a work permit.
- **Honiara:** The capital is eight kilometres from Henderson International Airport.
- **Airport Tax:** $S20 payable by passengers boarding international flights.
- **Health:** Malaria is a problem. Take anti-malarial medication a week before arrival, once a week during your stay, and for four weeks after departure. Consult your chemist or doctor about an appropriate brand or tablet. Maloprin is usually recommended.
- **Currency:** $50, $20, $10, $5, and $2 Solomon Islands notes; coins are $1, 50c, 20c, 10c, 5c, 2c, 1c.
- **Business Hours:** Government and some business offices Monday to Friday 8am to 4.30pm with a one-hour lunch break normally beginning at noon. Shops and some offices open Saturdays 8am - noon.
- **Banks:** National Bank of Solomon Islands, ANZ Banking Group, Westpac, Mondays to Fridays, 8.30am to 3pm.
- **Tipping:** Not expected and not encouraged.
- **Transport:** Taxis and buses in Honiara. Rental cars: Avis and Budget. International air: Air Niugini, Air Pacific, Qantas, Solomon Airlines serve Henderson Airport. Domestic: Solomon Airlines operates to 23 destinations.
- **Electricity:** 240 volts in Honiara and some outer island centres.
- **Radio:** The Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation broadcasts daily in English and Pidgin. No television.
- **Newspapers:** Solomon Star, Solomon Toktok, The Nius.
- **Honiara activities:** Golf, tennis, scuba diving, walks, battlefield tours, swimming, sailing, bush walking and fishing.
- **Souvenirs:** Solomon Islands law forbids the unauthorised export of war relics retrieved from land sites or sunken wrecks. Consult the National Museum of the Solomon Islands for advice.

The provinces

Guadalcanal. Land area: 5336 square kilometres. Population: 88,800 (including Honiara). Highest point 2447 metres. National capital: Honiara.

Central. Land area: 1276 square kilometres. Population: 19,000. Highest point: 510 metres. Provincial capital: Tulagi.

Western. Land area: 8573 square kilometres. Population: 58,000. Highest point: 1661 metres. Provincial capital: Gizo.

Ysabel. Land area: 4014 square kilometres. Population: 5000. Highest point: 1392 metres. Provincial capital: Buala.

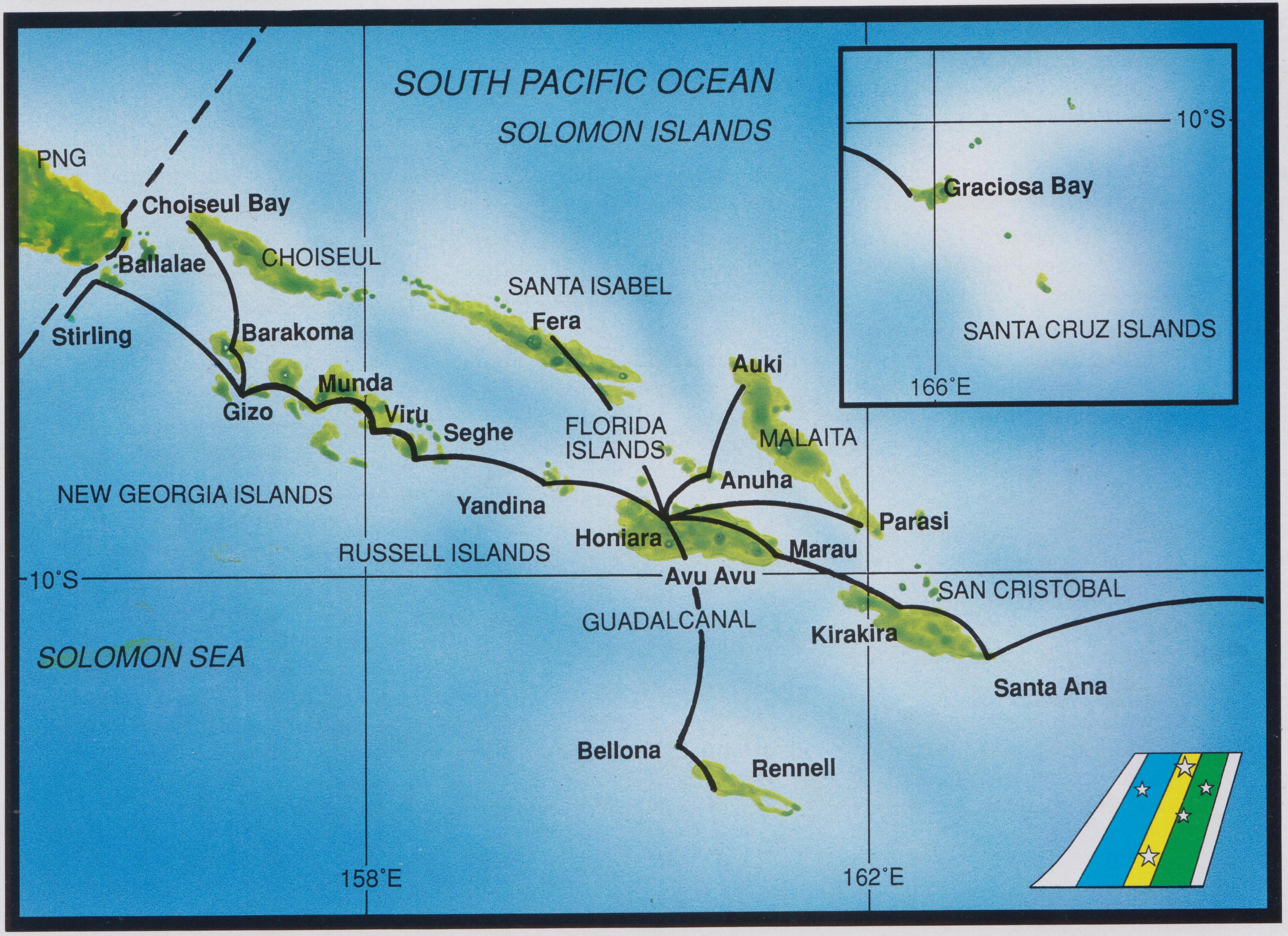
Malaita. Land area: 4243 square kilometres. Population: 82,000. Highest point: 1303 metres. Provincial capital: Auki.

Makira. Land area: 3188 square kilometres. Population: 23,000. Highest point: 1250 metres. Provincial capital: Kirakira.

Temotu. Land area: 926 square kilometres. Population: 16,000. Highest point: 923 metres. Provincial capital: Lata.

The world of Solomon Airlines

Domestic Routes


SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN
SOLOMON ISLANDS
PNG
Choiseul Bay
Ballalae
CHOISEUL
Stirling
Barakoma
SANTA ISABEL
Fera
Munda
Gizo
Viru
Seghe
FLORIDA ISLANDS
Auki
MALAITA
Anuha
NEW GEORGIA ISLANDS
Yandina
Honiara
RUSSELL ISLANDS
Parasi
Marau
10°S
Avu Avu
SAN CRISTOBAL
GUADALCANAL
Kirakira
SOLOMON SEA
Santa Ana
Bellona
Rennell
158°E
162°E
10°S
Graciosa Bay
SANTA CRUZ ISLANDS
166°E

Solomon Islands
Size: 27,556 square kilometres. Population: 302,000. Capital: Honiara: Products: Copra, palm oil, tuna, timber, cocoa, gold.

Australia
Size: 7.6 million square kilometres. Population: 16.8 million. Capital: Canberra. Products: Wheat, wool,meat, sugar, minerals, manufactured goods.

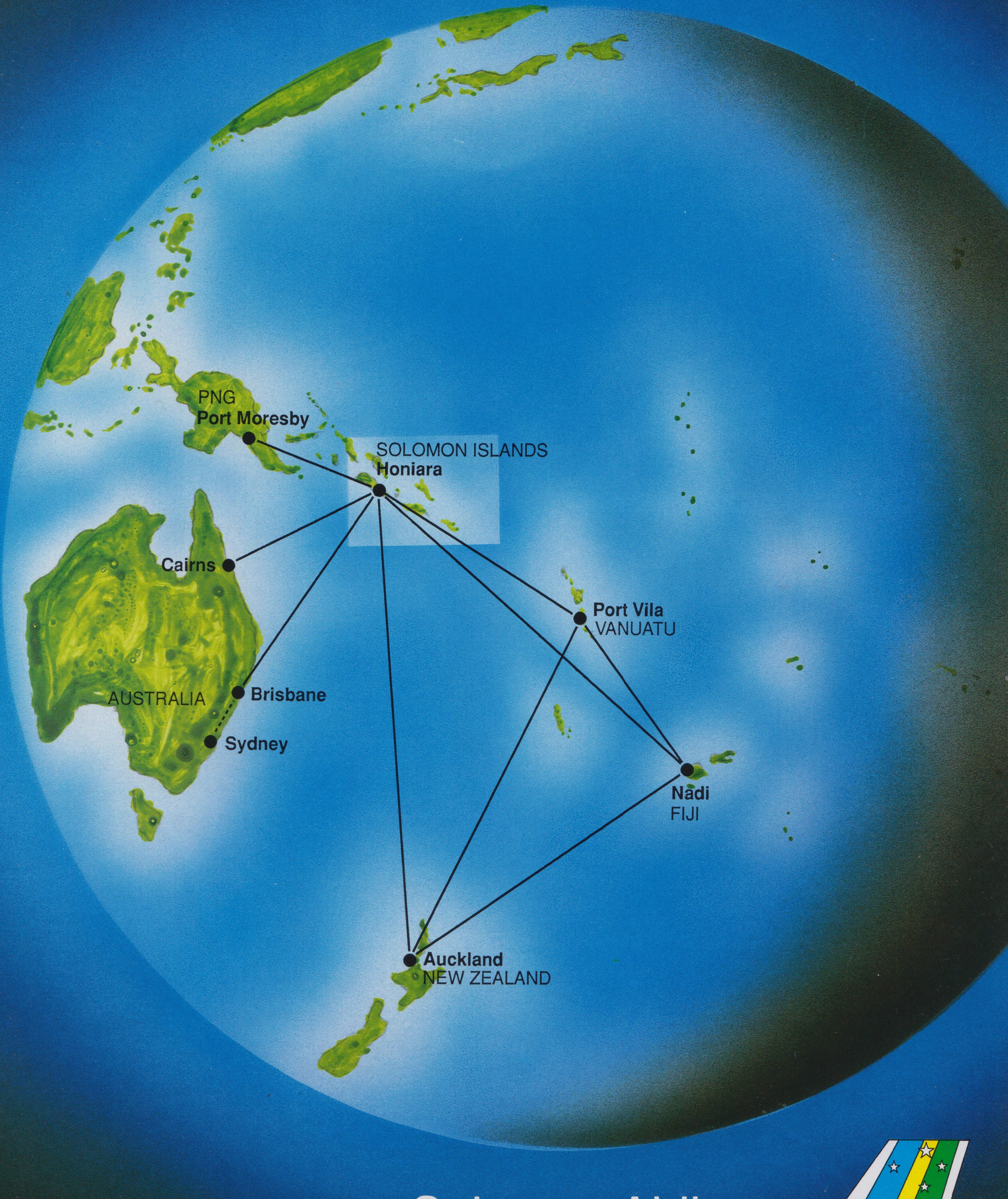
New Zealand
Size: 264,000 square kilometres. Population: 3.4 million. Capital: Wellington. Products: Meat, wool, dairy products, timber, fruit and vegetables, manufactured products.

Papua New Guinea
Size: 463,000 square kilometres. Population: 3.9 million. Capital: Port Moresby. Products: gold, copper, copra, timber, coffee, cocoa.

Fiji
Size: 18,300 square kilometres. Population: 720,000. Capital: Suva. Products: sugar, coconut oil, timber, tuna, ginger, gold, manufactured goods.

Vanuatu
Size: 12,180 square kilometres. Population: 130,000. Capital: Port Vila. Products: copra, meat, timber, cocoa.

International Routes


PNG
Port Moresby
SOLOMON ISLANDS
Honiara
Cairns
Port Vila
VANUATU
AUSTRALIA
Brisbane
Sydney
Nadi
FIJI
Auckland
NEW ZEALAND

Solomon Airlines

Solomon Islands National Airline

AIRLINE NIUS

Asiteta Tabe

They're on our team

ASITETA TABE

Meet Asiteta Tabe, 24, one of five Solomon Airlines cabin crew selected as probationary pursers.

Until she joined the airline, Asiteta had worked as a customs officer for seven years.

Asiteta's family migrated to the Solomon Islands from the then British colony of the Gilbert Islands in 1964. She was born at Wagina, Choiseul, where a large Gilbertese community settled to escape overpopulation pressures affecting their home island.

After a customs department career, how does she find flying?

"I'm so proud to be part of a team that 's trying to do its best," she says. "Learning procedures during training was a bit hard at first, after all those years since school, but now I feel confident about coping with any situation."

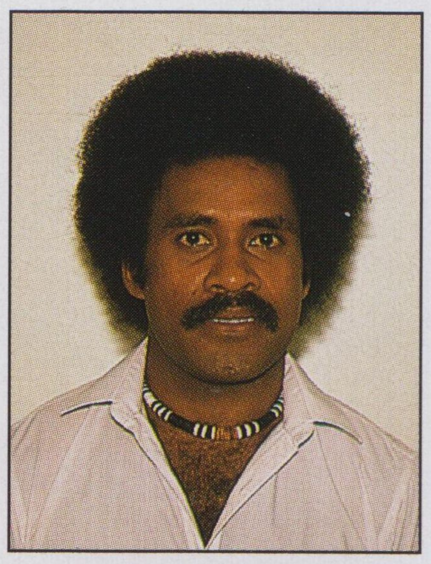
As pursers, Asiteta and her fellow pursers will normally lead five other cabin crew.

WILSON NE'E

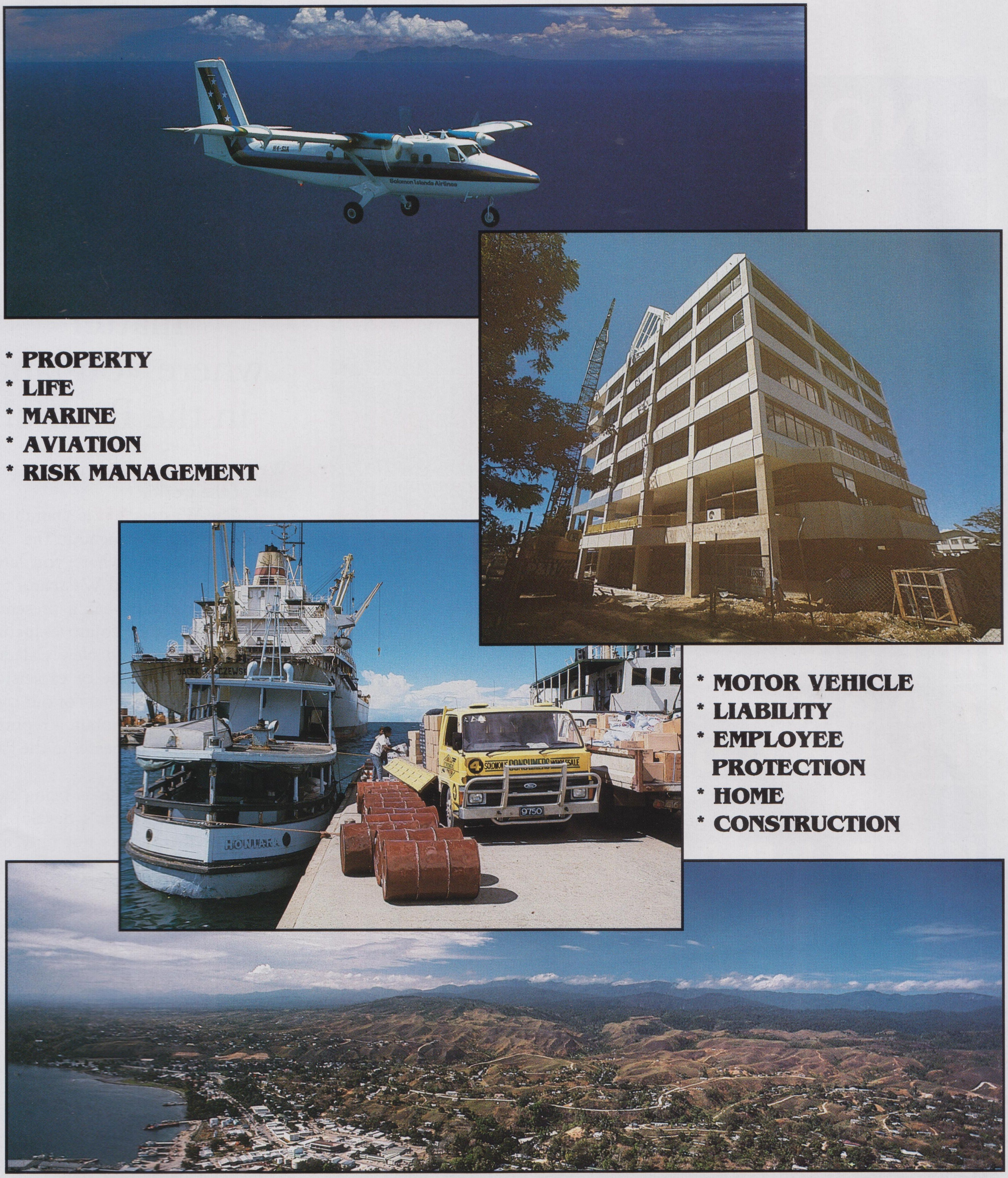
Wilson Ne'e is the sales and interline manager. He was born on the 19th March, 1961, and comes from Malaita. Wilson started his career with Solomon Airlines on the 30th November, 1980, holding various positions in the sales and ticketing department as well as traffic before his appointment to his present position in August, 1987.

He went to Su'u National Secondary School and has attended many airline courses while working with Solomon Airlines.

The position, sales and interline manager, holds quite a considerable responsibility. The job covers all interline activities plus other responsibilities such as advertising, promotions and product development.



Wilson Ne'e



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WILSON-ADDISON 65.584

THE NIUE CONNECTION

two small countries with a common interest — Guadalcanal

The Solomon Islands Boeing 737 jet *Guadalcanal* is chartered by Niue Airlines to operate its Auckland-Niue-Auckland flight. The service is flown by a Solomon Airlines crew.

Niue and the Guadalcanal

Words and photos: Shari and Don Cole

Abandon Stereotypes, All Ye Who Enter Here. You've got to admire a country that shuts up shop at 3.30 in the afternoon and goes home — not that there are many shops to shut in Alofi, the capital of Niue. Three small general stores, one sit-down lunch place, the Assembly building, and an open-air marketplace cluster near the low quadrangle that holds the post office, bank, and government offices. But if you think this is leading up to a tale of tropical languor, forget it. This is not play time; it's shift change.

Now the air traffic controller fishes for his family in a one-man vaka that hasn't changed much in centuries. The Secretary of the Government grubs weeds from his rocky taro plantation — a civil servant in touch with grass-roots realities. Busloads of school children and office workers head for chores in house and garden. And in the cool of evening, as heat-brittle pandanus stands soften, weavers turn back to projects begun at dawn, while others snatch a sunset hour for cricket or volleyball on the village green.

Niue doesn't look like the South Sea stereotype. It resembles any small, remote community of benign climate. People drive cars and motorbikes and wear western-style clothing. Television has put a dent in evening conversation. Sport and social events compete with traditional Saturday plantation work, doubling up the other days of the week. Only on Sunday, with its ban on work, and no television except the news, do people chat on doorsteps and stroll en masse.

Two stones in front of the Assembly - coral from the sea and limestone from the land — symbolise the forces that shaped the industrious Niuean character and lifestyle. Sea and land give grudgingly, yielding not abundance, but enough, for persistent effort.

Sparse soil and jagged coral rock constitute a farmer's nightmare, or a Japanese landscape gardener's dream, depending on your perspective. This 259 square kilometre island, huge by Polynesian standards, is an uplifted block of coral limestone located about midway between Tonga and Samoa. Two terraces rise abruptly form the sea

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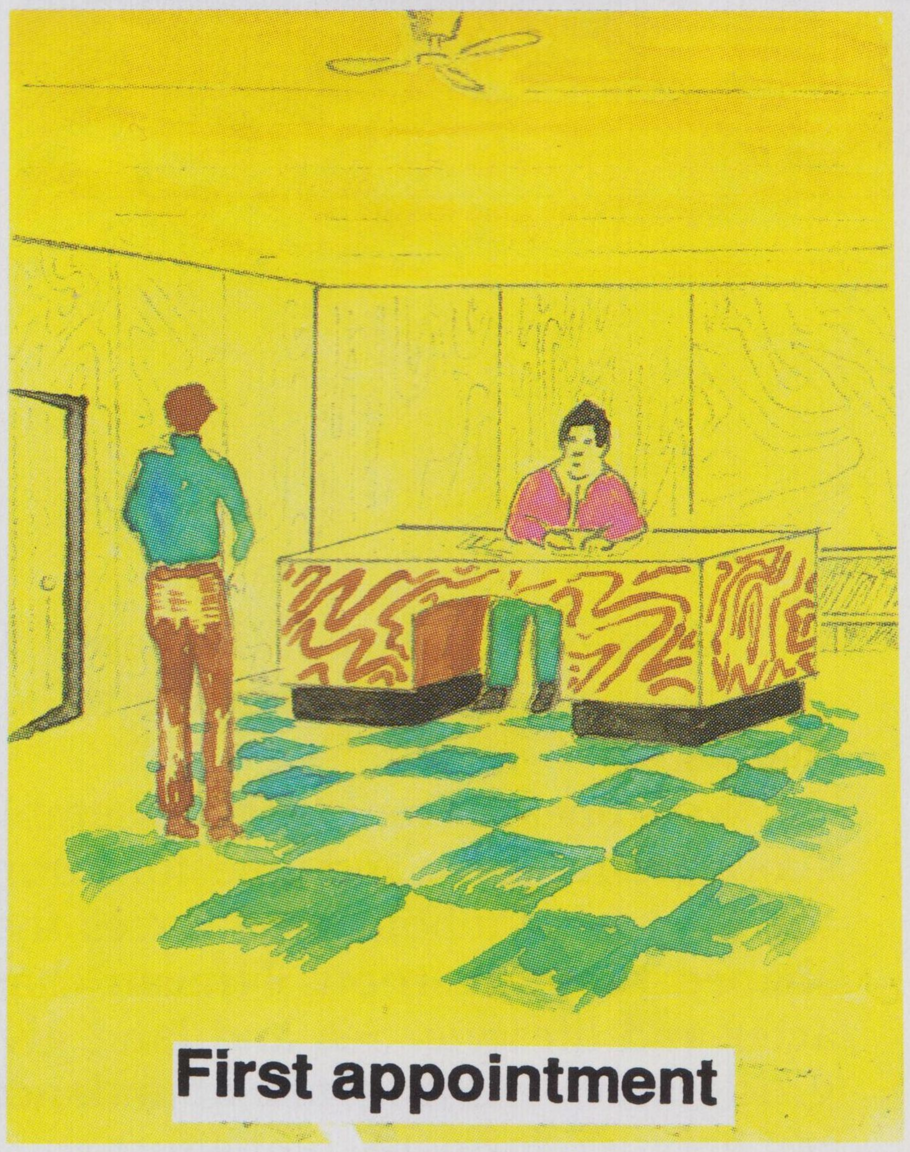

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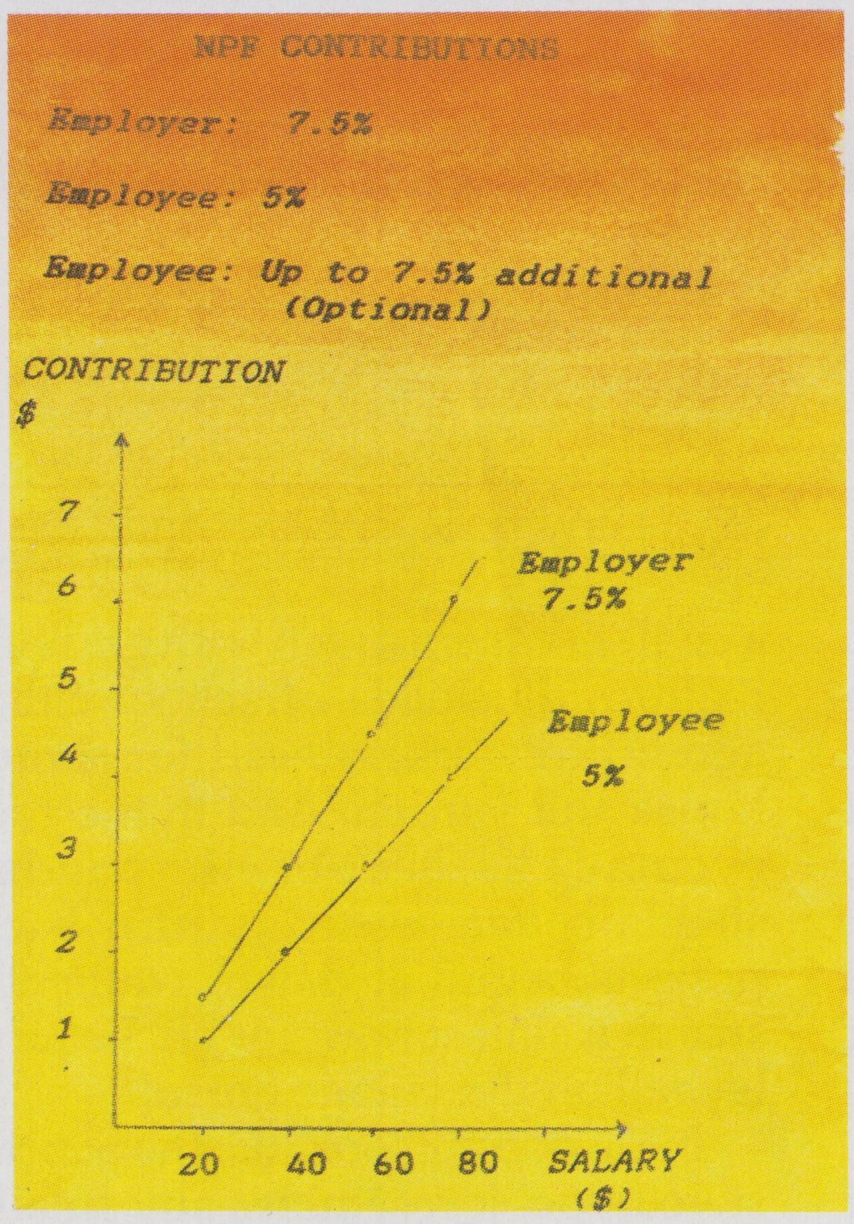

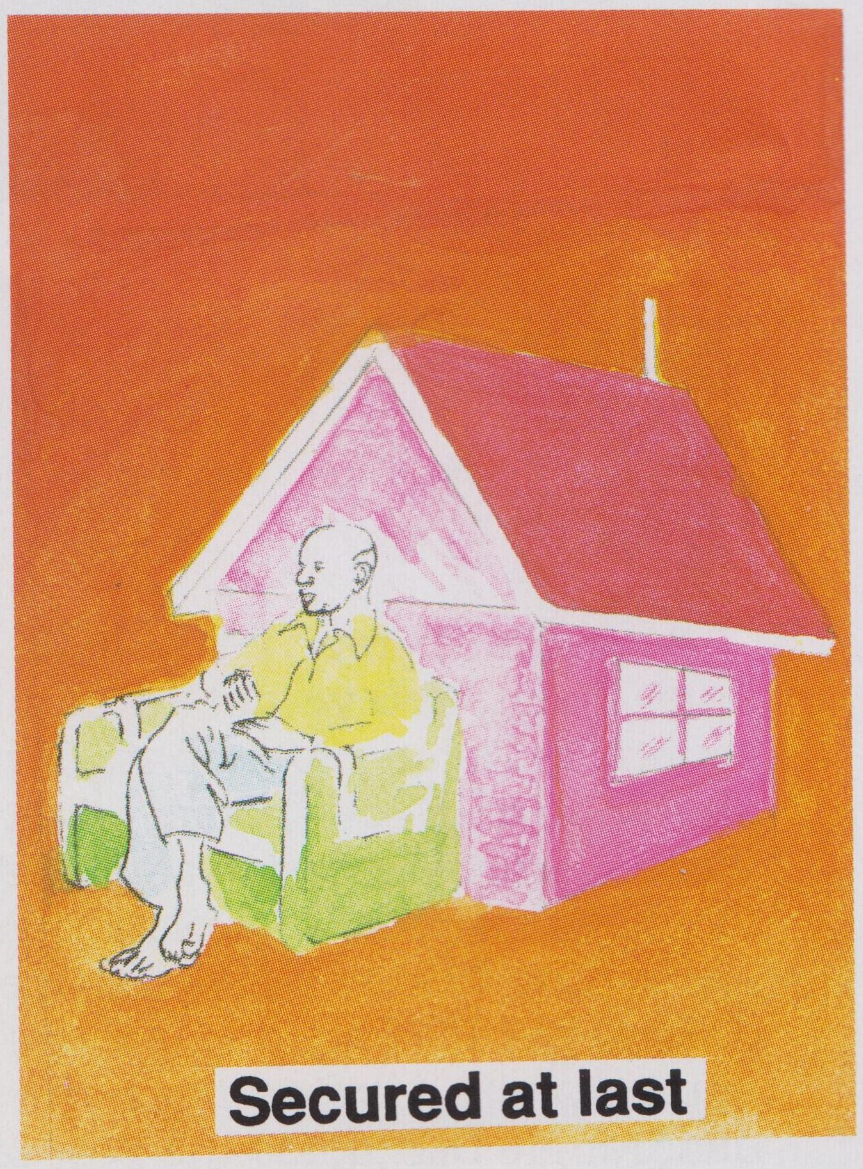

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to form a double-step rim round a depression once the floor of an atoll lagoon. Niue has neither mountains, nor beaches to speak of.

Over thousands of years, erosion and plant colonists created a thin layer of soil that tends to lie in pockets among jagged pinnacles. When you see the compressor out on a weekend, you know there's a funeral. You can't dig a grave in solid rock with shovels. The forest has no floor, but a jumble of fern-breaking labour. If the land is hard, there are compensations. Beauty and adventure lie beneath the surface, literally. As in limestone landscapes elsewhere, cracks and chasms drink the rain and turn into etching solution. Cracks widen into caves. Lime-laden drops coat stalactites with tinted calcium and crash into stalagmites below, building posts and columns. Slipping through dark passages and chambers you discover formations that ring to a touch. If you turn off the torch, you can play finger-music on the random xylophone in the humid and palpable darkness.

Where chasm and caves meet the sea, low sun slanting in reveals shades of rust and pink, sage and ochre. Deep turquoise pools host magenta and purple growths, and the sun flings a rainbow net across shallow floors. Surge channels slice the narrow reef, fissures where bright flashes dart, and shadows at the edge of vision graze the misty pastures of the sea. The sea feeds spirits as well as stomachs.

But it provides no easy living. Cliff-bound shores and heavy swells that often disrupt shipping also keep fishermen at home. Good weather may not coincide with good fishing. The one-man vaka, sportscar of outrigger canoes, evolved from the need to carry vessels up and down cliffs. Launching one is like catching the wave with a surf-board — a delicate, thin-hulled surf-board.

With the modern port facility — a concrete wharf — and improvement to village sea-access roads, some fishermen have adopted aluminium dinghies and motors. Others keep builders of traditional vaka busy with orders. "The dinghy is boring," says tourism officer Faama Viliamu, who fishes from sunset until dawn. "In a vaka you feel you're part of the sea." That can be an unsettling feeling when the catch is too big to club and drag abroad. Then you have to show it home, like *The Old Man And The Sea.*

Niueans themselves, products of centuries of storm, drought and hard work, don't fit the Polynesian mould. Or rather, they lie at one end of the Polynesian value scale, overlapping the more jolly, generous, and clan-minded European cultures. Democratic and pragmatic, they hide a considerable political savvy just under the surface. Economic director Toke Talagi summed it up in our first polite, get-acquainted conversation, "You're not in Samoa now. You can come to the point."

One anthropological theory says if you can't produce a surplus you don't get involved in games about who can accumulate more or give away more. Nevertheless, traditional ceremonies about giving and reciprocity remain, and modern prosperity has escalated the system.

Premier Sir Robert Rex describes how the child-focused ceremonies of ear piercing and hair cutting have changed. Formerly, the food given by the child's family to those who brought gifts of women's manufacture was grown and caught by the father — a declaration of his personal strength and industry. Sir Robert cites a 1930s land case that hinged on which great grandfather had given his daughter an ear-piercing ceremony. Today the extended family pools the money, sometimes taking out loans to be repaid from gift money received.

From legend and language, Niueans

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believe that their ancestors came from Samoa, Tonga, Pukapuka, and Aitutaki in small groups, perhaps 900-1300 years ago. Legends disagree as to whether the name Niu e was a cry of joy upon discovering that coconuts, at least, grew in this forbidding land, or whether adventurers abroad returned in triumph with this most useful of plants.

From rare experiences with visitors from other islands, Niueans learned that epidemics followed contacts. By the time of European exploration, they had established a closed-door policy — including any Niuean returning from abroad. Captain Cook called Tonga "The Friendly Islands" after the lavish hospitality shown his expedition. He walked ashore in Niue all ready, according to an account by gunner John Marra, to name it "Prince Fredric's Island". Thrown spears and stones quickly changed his mind, so he sailed away and named it "Savage Island". This hasn't made him popular with the locals, but it did keep slavers and traders away until conversion to Christianity had dimmed the Niuean reputation for fierceness.

Modern Niue is neither a colony, nor a totally independent country like most of the New Pacific. Under "independence in free association", Niueans are both New Zealand citizens and self-governing through the 20-member Assembly. Recently the Niuean government granted to other New Zealand citizens the right to live here, provided they stay out of trouble.

Extended families own land in common and appoint an administrator to apportion it for use to members. Those who leave to live long-term in New Zealand lose their tenure. Sometimes problems arise when they return to reclaim land and homes. And some do return. Niueans are tired of hearing about falling population. It's true that several times more of them now live in New Zealand and elsewhere than in Niue. It's also true that the population of just over 2200 is less than half what it was before the destructive hurricanes of 1959 and '60. But those who have never left, and those who have returned after long years away, believe they constitute a determined hard core. Following Cyclone Ofa, they dug their heels in.

"My children say, 'Come to New Zealand,' but you're only free on the island," says master weaver Uini Taleni Seu. She understands the effect of distances between homes of friends in Auckland, difficult public transportation, and the loss of identity and position in a small, familiar community.

The hurricane has torn up her garden. Neighbour's pigs and chickens dig at her orchids. "The young ones aren't interested in weaving," she says, "just want to go and buy." Still she plants and dyes and weaves - and laughs when we say, "The only good pig is a cooked pig."

Such craft people are the backbone of the present export economy. Honey, and remittances from relatives overseas contribute importantly. At a time when air transport was already disrupted, the hurricane badly damaged the hotel. While it is being rebuilt, guesthouses are full of overseas project workers and a few repeat visitors who come every year to get away from it all. The new tourists are relatives returning to see the land of their birth.

While they wait for the hotel, tourism workers rebuild walking tracks and picnic facilities at beauty spots, and the locals enjoy them. Perhaps they feel a need to get away from it all themselves. "There's something every weekend from now until Christmas," said one in September. With independence celebrations in October, village garden and craft shows, weddings and Saturday sports, families have begun to schedule ear piercings and hair cuttings on weekday afternoons.

A slow pace of life in the South Pacific? Not on Niue.

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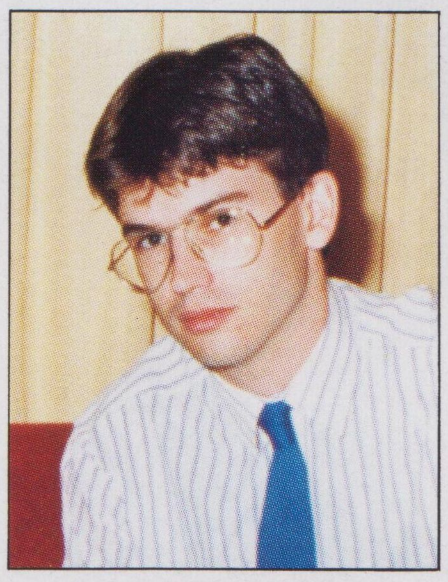

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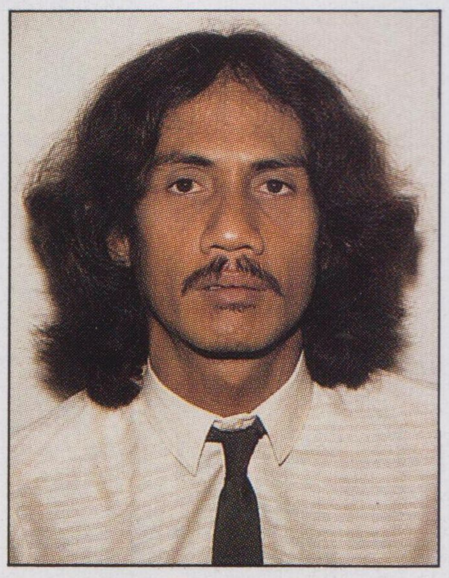

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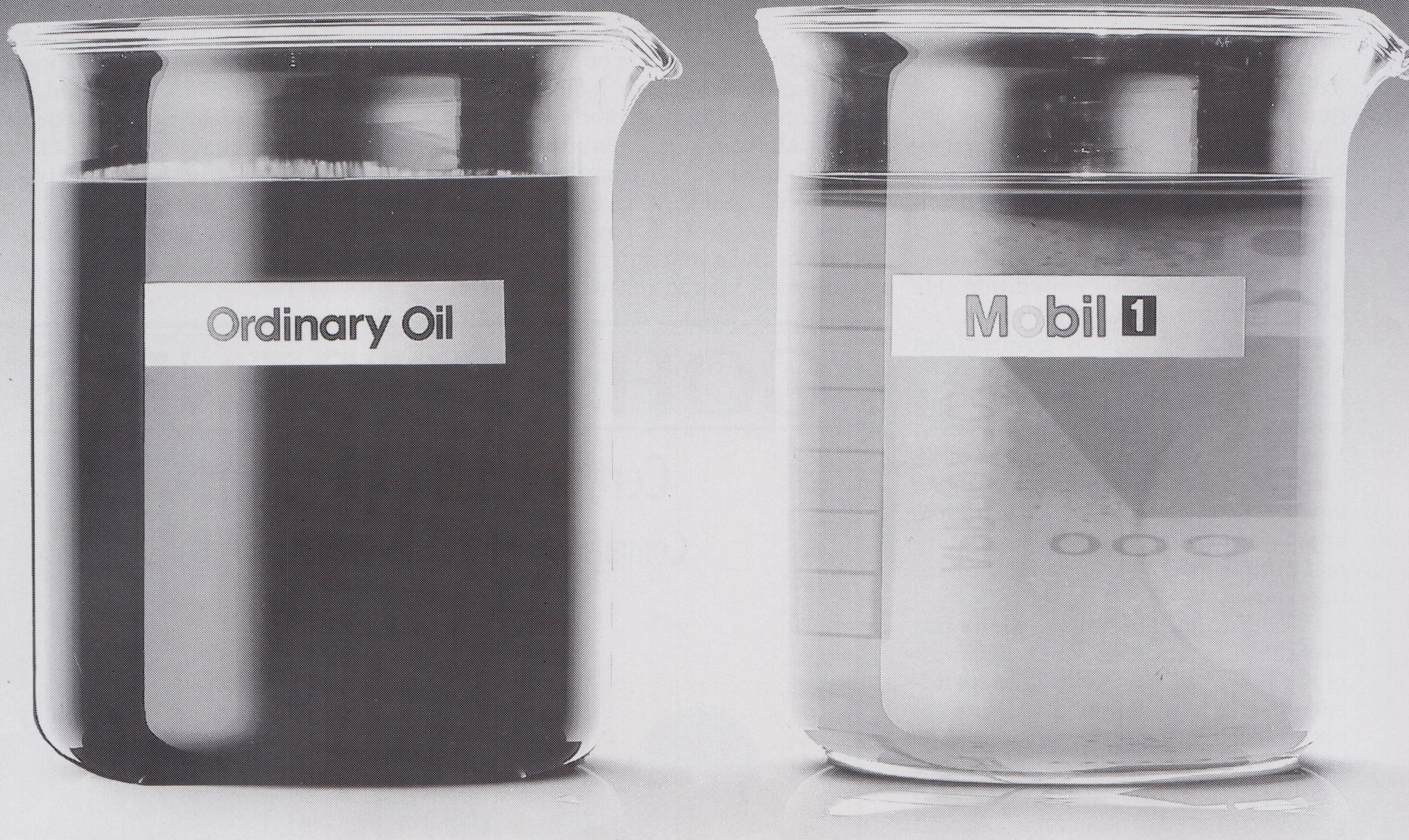

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Solomon nuts grow on large trees in the forests and gardens of the Solomon Islands. The trees grow up to 35 metres tall and can live for hundreds of years. The nuts are harvested seasonally by local people climbing the trees and cutting down branches or by collecting fallen nuts from the ground.

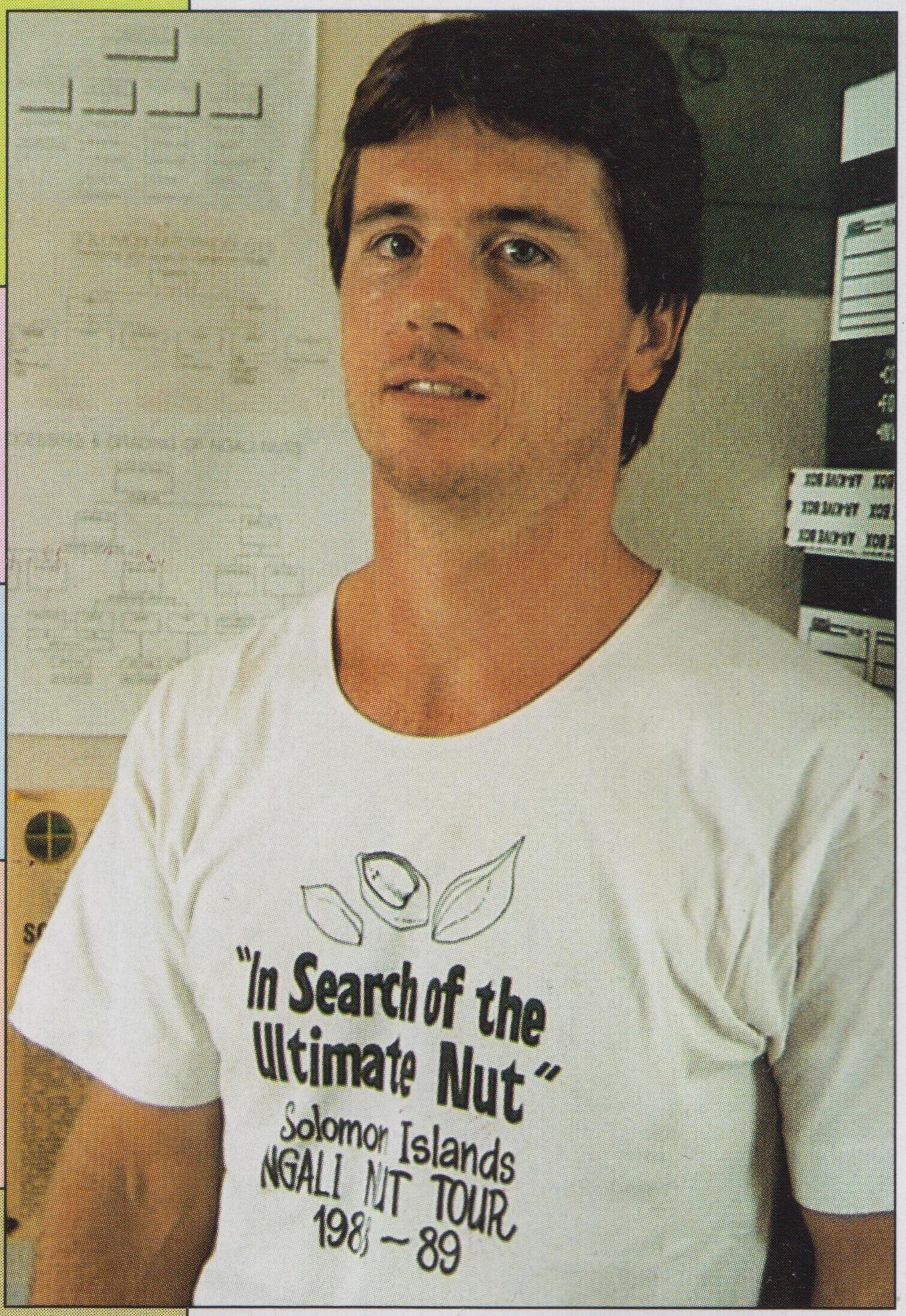
Solomon nuts form an important part of the traditional diet. In some parts of the country harvest time is celebrated by custom rituals, dances, and songs — much the same as American people celebrate "Thanksgiving Day."

The shell of the nut is very hard. To crack the shell by hand using a stone, without damaging the delicate kernel inside, is a very skillful operation which local people learn from an early age.

Solomon nuts can be eaten raw or cooked. The nuts have a delicate flavour which compliments almost all other foods: during cooking they can be mixed with casseroles, soups, fish dishes and vegetables. Raw, they are delicious in muesli, yogurt, and icecream.

Solomon nuts are high in fibre and protein and contain a balanced mix of unsaturated and saturated oils. Because they are grown in the forest there are no chemical additives.

Source: Solomon nut project, Honiara



NUTS

they're small but they're a big hope for our nation

Barry Evans (pictured) wants to turn the Ngali nut into a best seller for the Solomons

"There's a lot of talk about what's coming out of the forest," says Barry Evans, the nut man at the Dodo Creek research station near Honiara. "You're staring a beasty in the eye," he says, flourishing the stuff of his work before your eyes. "In future this will be very important." He's talking about the Ngali Nut, which Solomon Islanders have been eating in huge amount for thousands of years. It's not strictly a nut. Botanically it is classed as a drupe, explains Evans, a senior research scientists attached to Dodo Creek under British aid.

The ngali grows on a tree nearly everywhere in the Solomons. "It is phenomenally important," says Evans. "Almost staple diet. It is nearly as important as staple root crops like taro and yam. When you clear an area of forest, you clear everything but the ngali. You find them on high ridges, marking old village sites. They are used as boundary markers, they're pleasant to live under because of their shade, and I've seen very large groves of them carefully planted by villagers years ago."

By Robert Keith-Reid

Having been part of everyday Solomons Islands life and custom for thousands of years, the ngali is being treated now as a possible new cash crop of a scale which could make it an alternative to ailing copra and cocoa exports. Evans believes it could possibly rival the high-priced macadamia nut, which in Hawaii is a multi-million dollar business. Last year a small quantity

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of ngali was sent to Australia for trial by a health food store chain. "The health food industry in Australia is our first target," explains Evans. "It is close and high value. There is a lot of interest being shown in it and Hawaii has asked us for germ plasm because it is being looked as an alternative to macadamia."

Though he talks with enthusiasm about ngali, Evans is anxious to stress something else; before it can be put on the market in big quantities to become a big money-maker, a lot more work is needed to prepare the ngali for market. The ngali scientific name is *Canarium indicum*. It grows in a wide area, from West Africa to the Pacific as far as the Solomons and Vanuatu. Not all species yield nuts. After spending a year and a half travelling all over the Solomons looking for ngali trees, Evans is sure of two things. These are that the Solomons has more ngali species, more than 30, than anywhere else, and that a species named *harveyi*, found only on the Santa Cruz Islands and some northern islands of Vanuatu, is much the largest of all.

While Solomon Islanders have known about the ngali for centuries, the tree and its fruit are new to science. The ngali is a lowland forest tree, though Evans has found them at heights of 500 to 600 metres and thinks they will be found higher. They grow to a height of about 30 metres and can live for centuries. Work at Dodo Creek shows that a ngali can begin producing nuts in as few as three years, but five years is the more likely onset of maturity. Not much is known about the amounts of nuts produced during their July-December season, but workers collected 320 kilos of nuts from a tree that was more than a hundred years old.

Solomon Islanders bash the nuts open with stones to eat the raw kernel, or slightly bake and store them by drying them over a household fire. The nut has a very high oil content, 70 percent. It is 14 percent protein and high in fibre — features of great appeal to health-food nutters. The protective outer shell is strong, which means — an important point — that the nut can stand a lot of knocking about undamaged as it is bagged and then thrown about on the rough passage by sea and lorry to market.

Potentially, there's a lot more to the ngali than just eating. Evans lists 15 possible uses. With the whole tree, soil conservation, shade, building materials, timber. From ngali resin, candles, perfume, and oil; from ngali flesh food and fertiliser; from ngali shells fuel, activated carbon and nursery bedding; and from the kernel food, confectionery, and oil.

"We have to try to gauge the market and then work out production systems," says Evans. "There is a lot pressure to identify other cash crops as alternatives to copra and cocoa, for which long term prices seem gloomy. We have to educate the health food market, where the ngali is now completely unknown, to make customers aware that it is a lot more natural than most other things they get from health shops." Evans stresses: "We are very, very much in the incubation stage. What we're trying to do is to get as much commercial information as possible — drying costs and time, shelf life, the time it takes to crack and process them."

The Dodo Creek station isn't yet willing to set a date for commercial production, though small amounts are being marketed commercially in Honiara market for test purposes. It probably will be before the end of the 1990s before ngali begins to appear in Solomon Islands export lists. But Evans doesn't seem to have much doubt about the ngali nut's future. The T-shirt he likes to wear at work is emblazoned with the words: "In Search of the Ultimate Nut."

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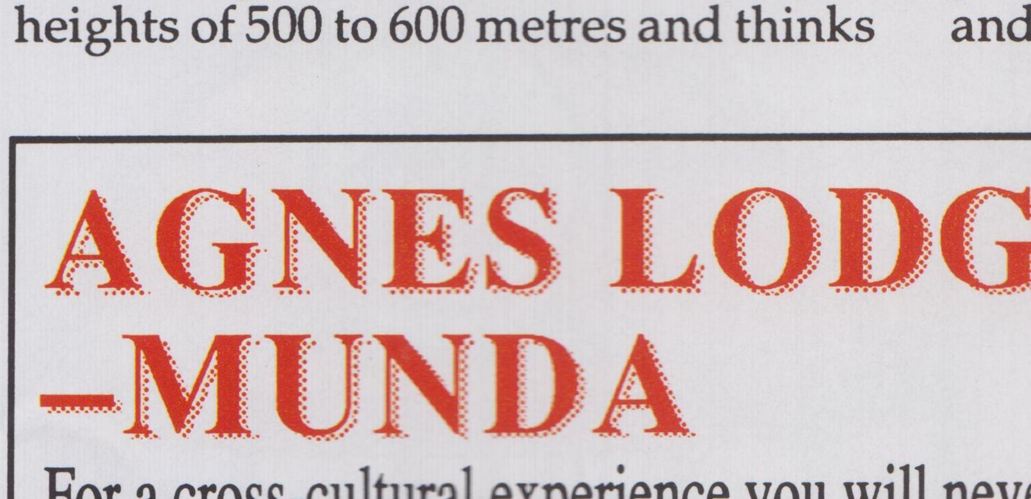

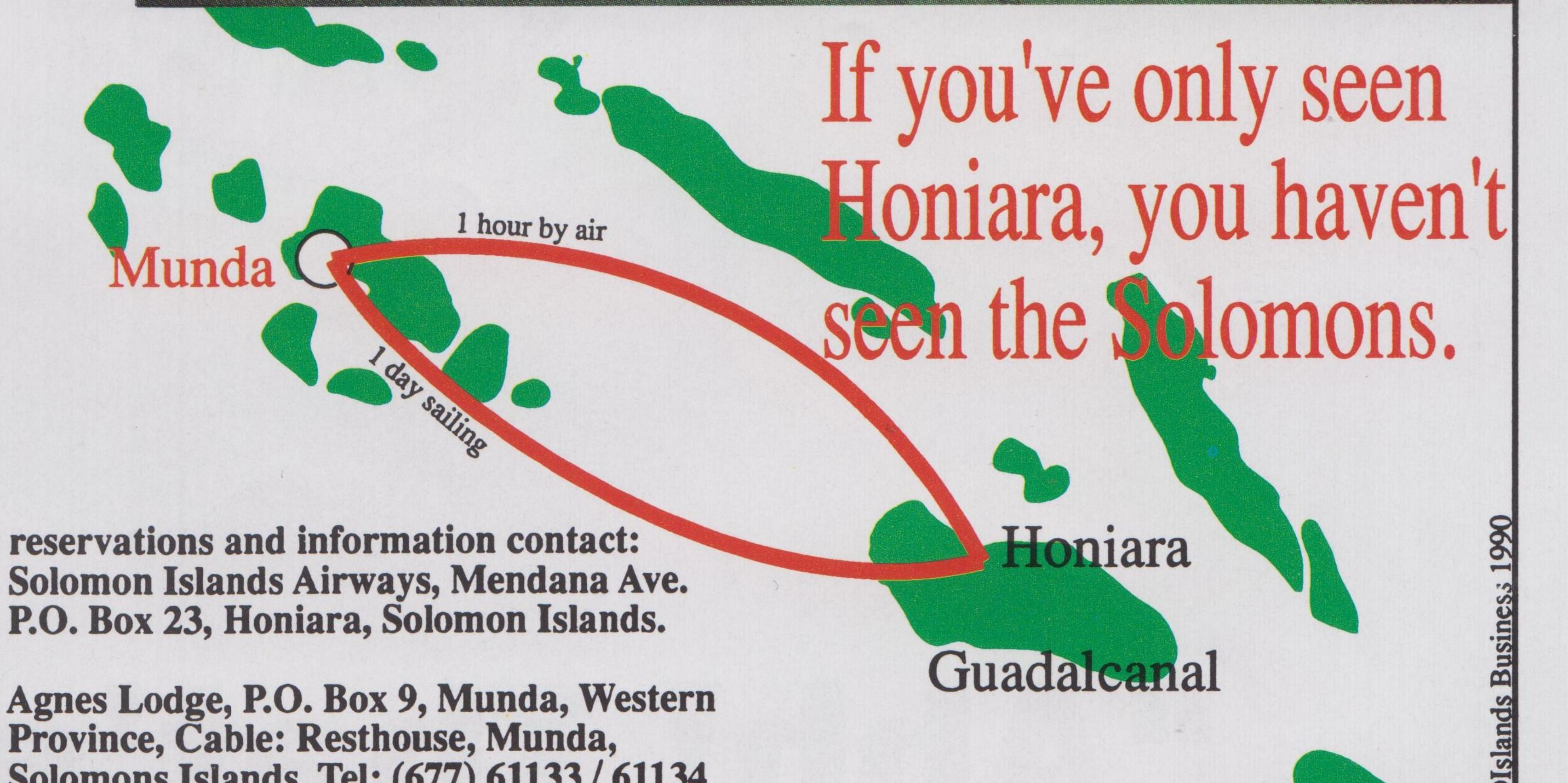

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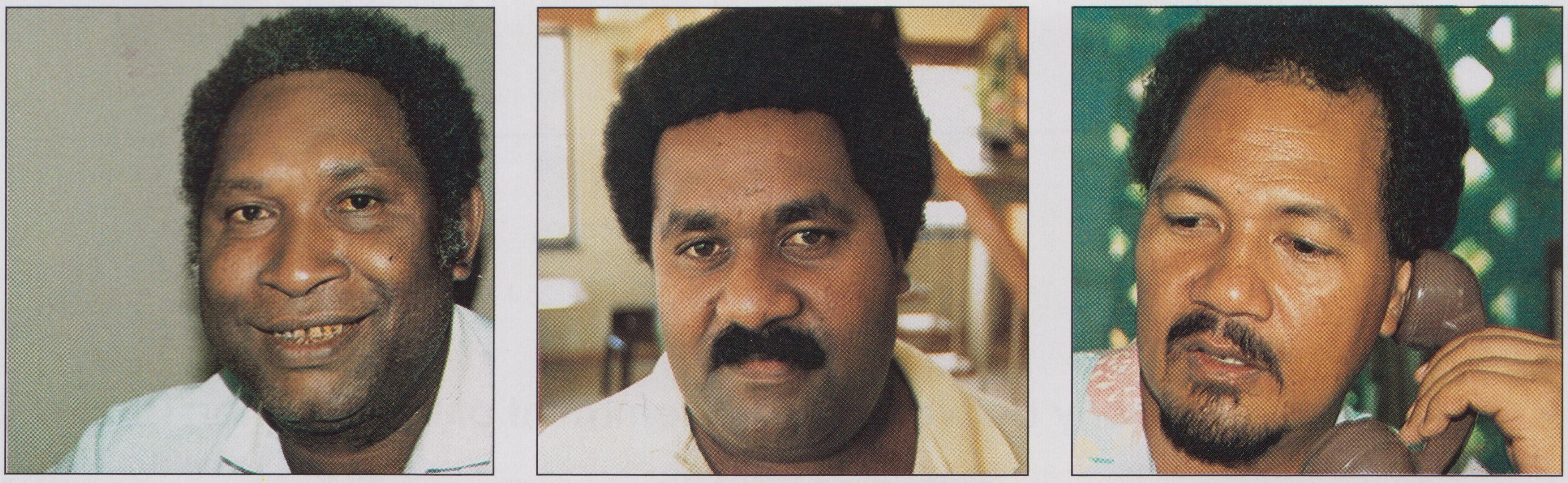
Patteson Mae's first recollection of Radio Happy Isles is this. "I was 10 years old when I was at boarding school. The radio set had aerials with two big batteries. From 6pm to 7pm, for an hour, all the school gathered round the radio to listen, six days a week." Those were the pure and simple early days of what is now the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation.

In 1952, the British colonial government opened Station VQO at Honiara, broadcasting for just that hour six days a week on 1030 kilocycles with a 400 watt transmitter. Engineers didn't think that the lower-powered transmitter would reach very far. They were delighted to find that the nightly local news, weather, and shipping reports and brief sports, talk, and music shows were being picked up nearly everywhere except parts of Western Province, southern Guadalcanal, and San Cristobal.

Today Mae's links with broadcasting are far from being pure and simple. As the corporation's general manager since 1986, he's beset by the worries of running a $1,000,000 a year organisation on the air for 18 hours a days seven days a week. He's got to think about making money, improving programmes, FM radio, television and the corporation's international role in such organisations as the Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association, Asian



Men of the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (from left): Patteson Mae, Johnson Honimae, Dykes Angiki

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Broadcasting Union and Pacific Islands News Association, of which he is currently president.

Solomon Islands broadcasting, in fact, dates back to 1944, when the United States Army opened Radio City near Henderson Airport to relay American news and music to the troops for 42 hours every week. After the troops left a small group of radio operators and technicians used the government's wireless and telegraph station at Honiara to run a simple broadcasting service. In 1948 there were 57 licensed listeners.

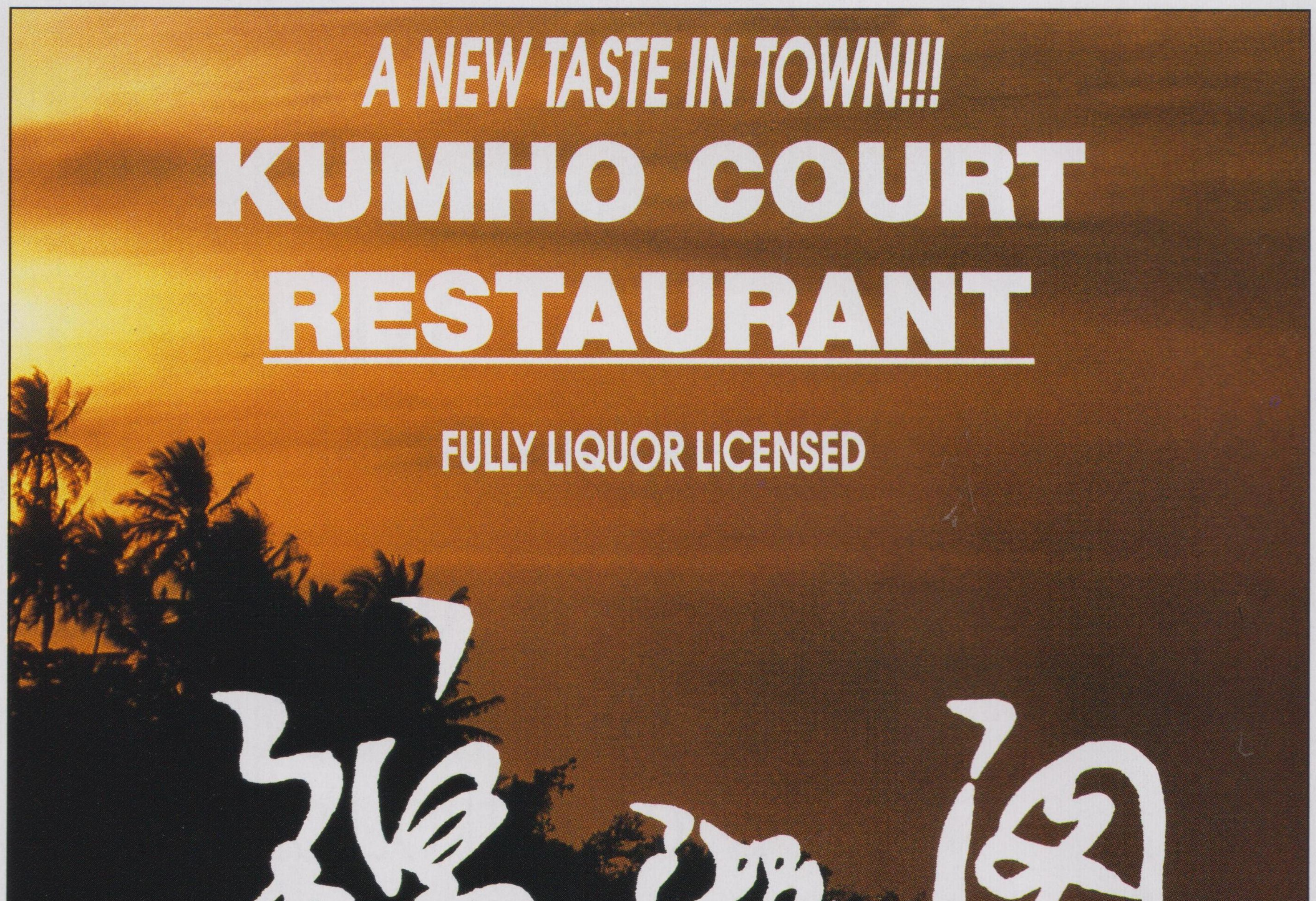
Today, says Mae, for more than 300,000 Solomon Islanders, there's probably at least one radio in every second household. "We cover the whole nation, judging by the response we get from all four corners to service messages. Solomon Islands people rise with the sun. They listen up to 7am and at night the majority listen between 5.30 pm and 8.30 pm. Young people may listen to close down at 12." The Solomon Islands broadcasting system grew through the 1960s. In 1976, the Legislative Assembly enacted a broadcasting ordinance to establish the service as a corporate body. In 1982, the corporation opened a new broadcasting complex at Rove. The first regional station, Radio Happy Lagoon, opened at Gizo in 1981, followed by Radio Temotu in 1984.

The easiest way of discovering what the corporation's all about is to tune into its medium and shortwave frequency broadcasts in Pidgin and English. News 10 times a day, World Blong Iumi, Calling Provinces, Farmers' Magazine, Radio Doctor, Custom Interlude, String Band Hit Parade, Hits From the International Top 40, The Bible and You, Shipping, Weather, Anti-Malaria Messages. The corporation can't be accused of failing to cater for all tastes.

But Radio Happy Isles has pressing worries, summed up with one word: Money. With a budget now running at more than $S1.1 million a year, it is heavily dependent on revenue from advertising and special messages that earn it about $700,000 a year. Last year a $300,000 government grant was cut to $100,000 and the corporation had to inflict economies on itself. "We're finding it very difficult," says Mae. "We've been operating on an overdraft since the beginning of 1990 and we're forced into a situation to find extra money to keep services going. We increased advertising rates by 30 percent but because of inflation that does not help much. We're selling more air time, but we may be forced to cut services. A reduction of staff will be the last thing, since we're short of staff."

Late last year, the government chipped in with another $50,000 to ease the corporation's difficulties. But realistically, says Mae, the corporation is not anticipating a restoration of aid to the former level. "The local advertising market is not really big enough to make SIBC profitable, because SIBC was never meant to be commercially viable. If we had been a commercial station we wouldn't have taken the political decision to open the regional stations."

What about television? About 3000 video sets are estimated to be in use locally. Since the Solomon Islands are well outside the footprints of satellite television services, the pictures from them picked up by ground dish receivers are so distorted that nobody bothers. The government is looking at television. Last year a mission went overseas to check technical possibilities and later an independent study was commissioned. "A full commercial service is definitely not viable," says Mae. "A service would have to be restricted to Honiara because we couldn't afford satellite relays. SIBC's attitude is that it wants television to be part of SIBC to ensure that programmes are in line with the customs and traditions of the country."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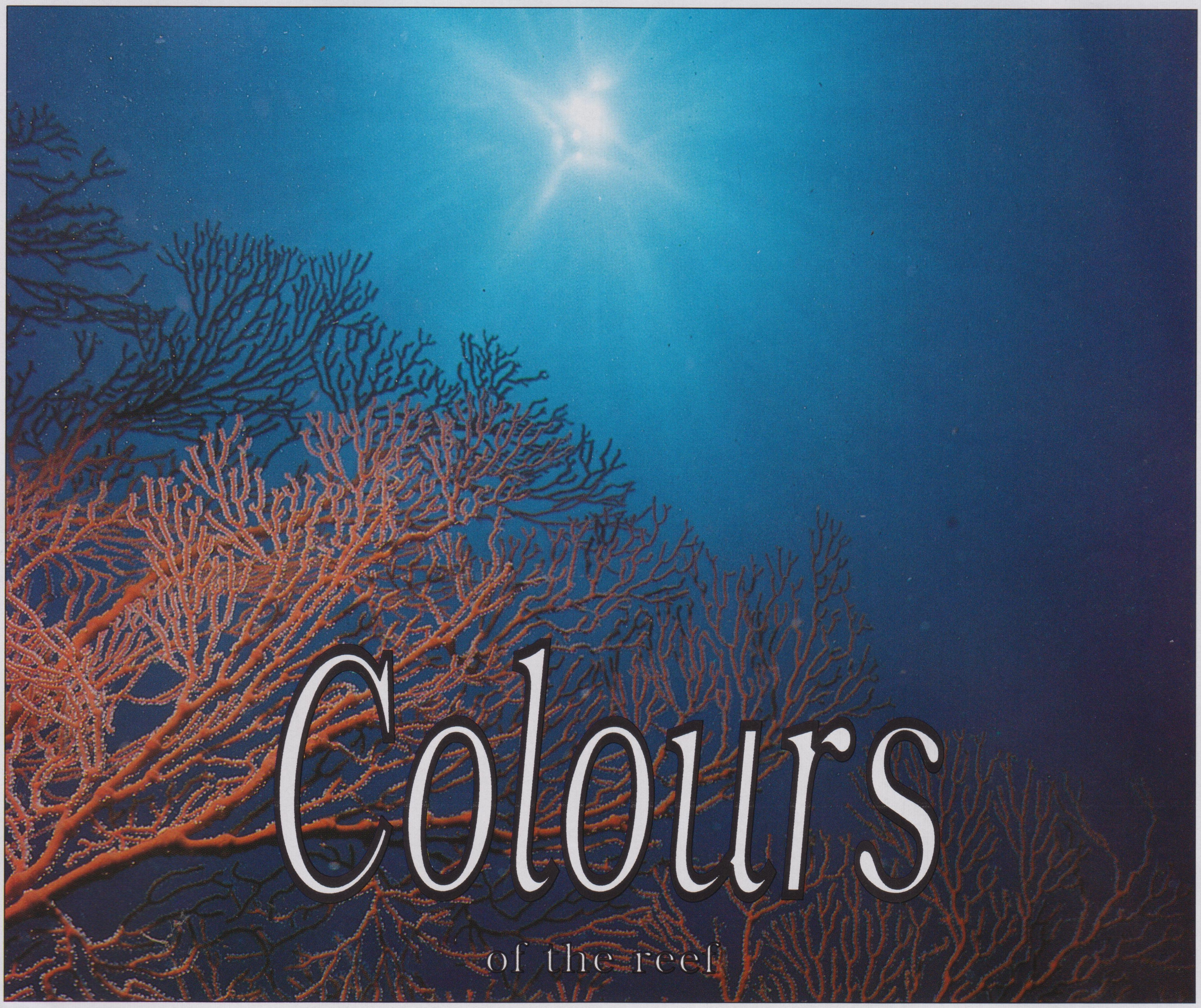


Colours

of the reef

Perhaps that aspect of the tropical coral reef that impacts most dramatically on human senses is one of color. Overly enthusiastic writers of popular travel guides invariably resort to terrestrial metaphors: “Coral gardens”; “jewel-like seashells”; “fish like gaudy butterflies” and the envitable “rainbow of colours”. But, not too suprisingly, the reasons for the multitude of colors on the reef are not to elicit gasps of wonder from divers. The biological significance of these colours and patterns is more pragmatic but no less impressive for that.

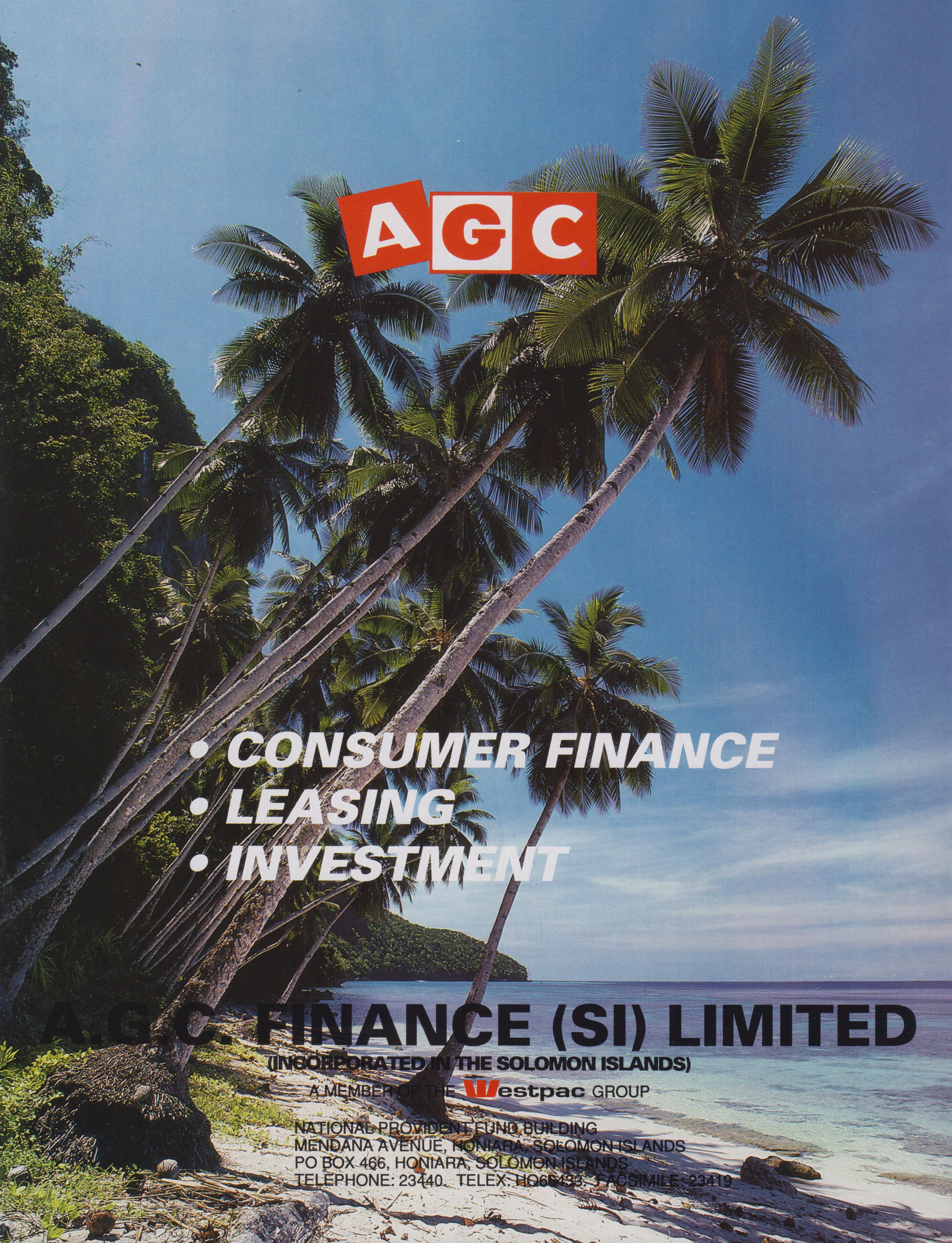
From a human viewpoint, a discussion on colour of the coral reef is a subjective exercise at best. As sunlight passes through water, its component colours are absorbed with increasing depth. Red is the first colour to be absorbed - a cut finger bleeds green at a depth of 10 metres. Underwater however, the human brain compensates for this selective absorption, “replacing” lost colours to some extent.

Fishes. After the corals themselves, these are - to the divers - the obvious life form on the reef - and probably the most colourful. In an ecosytem where competition for available resources is fierce and population densities high - such as occurs on a coral reef - it is important to be able to recognise your kin. This is one of the main reasons for the brilliant colors and patterns of so many reef fishes - species recognition. If you are a fish, it obviously helps if you can easily recognise - by colour and pattern - a potential mate amongst so many other species. It also helps if you can advertise to others of your own species that this niche is occupied.

It may also be - again if you are a fish - that you are relatively inoffensive or perhaps your prey is quicker than you are. In these cases camouflage can help. Many of the small gobies that live only on specific types of corals are often almost transparent, their bodies lacking colour pigment. In this way the absence of colour is an effective camouflage. The bright colours of other fish are also effective camouflage; the high contrast patterns breaking up the body outline. Species such as the scorpionfishes, lizardfishes, flatheads and others have evolved a colour and pattern similar to the mottled substrate on which they perch. They may sometimes further enhance this camouflage by partially burying themselves. When a potential meal passes, they are instantly alive; grabbing their prey with a speed that belies their apparent sloth.

The eye of a coral fish represents a visual clue to a predator and for this reason many of these fishes have the eye effectively camouflaged - usually by means of the iris colour merging with the surrounding pattern. Carrying this further, some fishes have a “false’ eye marking at the tail end of their bodies, inviting predators to strike at a less vulnerable part of their anatomy.

Words and photos: Mike McCoy



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Still other fishes are effective mimics. By assuming the colours and patterns of another species - usually a poisonous or otherwise distasteful species - the mimic is afforded the same protection as the model; predators quickly learn by experience that a certain species is non-edible and having learnt this lesson associate its colour and pattern with its inedibility.

One of the more guileful mimics amongst the fishes is the sabretoothed blenny. This little blue and black striped fish, some eight centimetres in length, is virtually identical to its model - the cleaner wrasse. The cleaner wrasse attends large fish, picking and external parasites on their body and even in their gills and mouth. With its characteristic bobbing display, the cleaner wrasse attracts would-be "customers" who remain motionless, often with fins spread and mouth gaping, while the wrasse grooms them. The blenny also mimic the motion of the wrasse and so attracts larger fish for grooming. However, instead of removing parasites, the blenny takes a quick and savage bite of scale or fin - to the obvious chagrin of the victim. Larger fish will often pursue the blennies for quite some distance over the reef after having been fooled by their appearance and so losing their "pound of flesh" to this small imposter.

The social structure of many reef fish societies requires that the juveniles are readily distinguishable from the adults and the females from the males. Many fishes undergo a radical change in colour and pattern as they grow. In this way the juveniles of the species are advertising - by their colour - that they are not the territorial threat to the adults. Likewise the females, by being a different colour - sexual dichromatism - are indicating that they pose no threat to the dominant males in the hierarchy.

Although fishes can certainly perceive colors, there is evidence suggesting that many, if not most, of the reef fishes are red-blind. Indeed, red is an unknown colour in diurnal reef fishes. However, many of the nocturnal fish that forage over the reef after sundown are red, adding weight to the red-blind theory; if your potential predators are red-blind, then red is obviously a good colour to be - especially at night when most of the predators are active. The diurnal fish too, often undergo a colour change at night. Some lose their brilliant colours and patterns, assuming duller, lesser conspicuous marking. Some, such as

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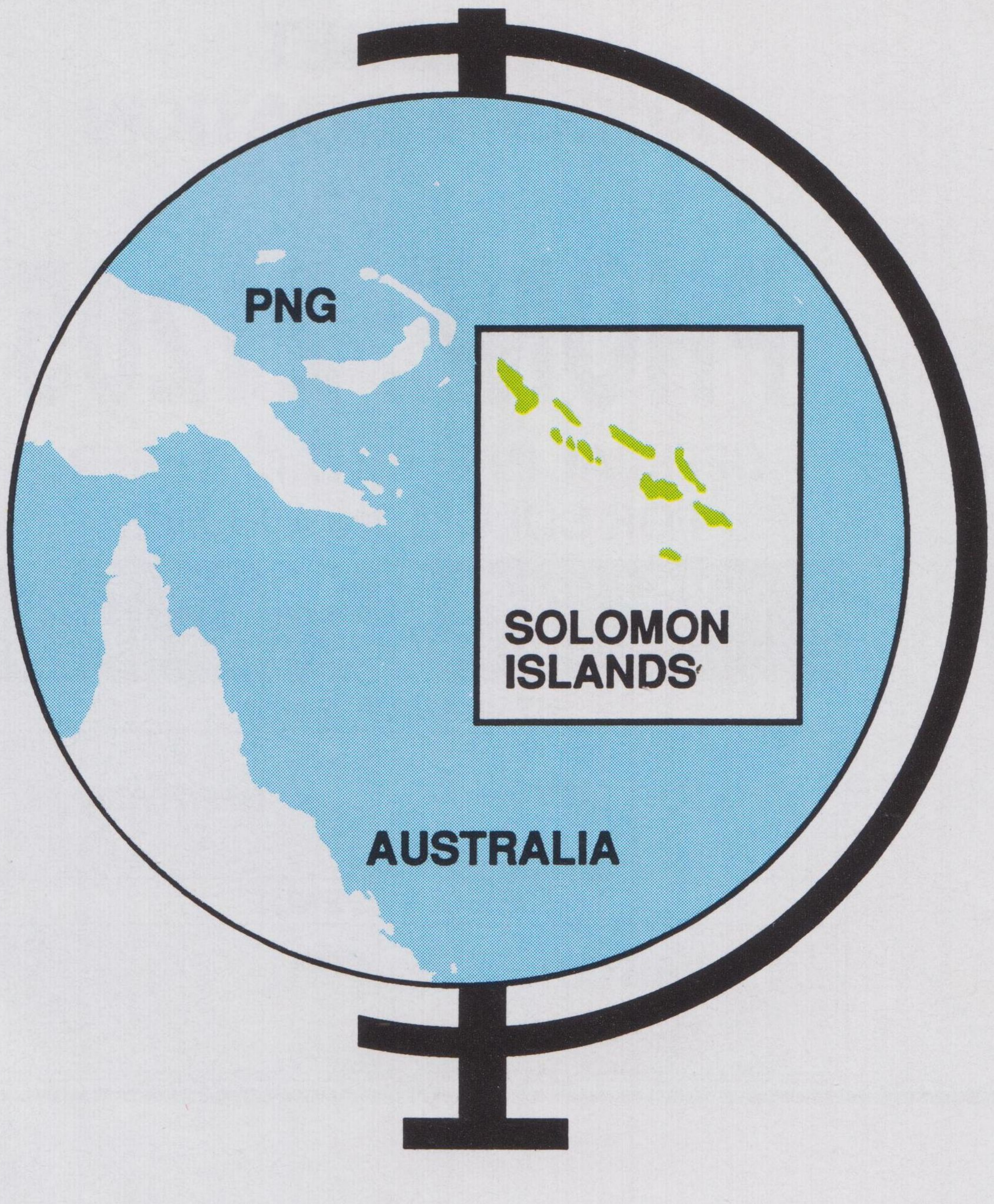

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the schooling fusiliers, change from a bright blue to a shade of red or pink - the red-blind theory again.

The colours of the hard or reef-building corals are determined by the presence in the tissues of the polyps of minute single-celled algae. These tiny plants - called zooxanthellae - use the energy of sunlight to convert carbon dioxide into carbohydrates and oxygen by the process of photosynthesis. They also greatly enhance the ability of the coral animal to form limestone from the calcium in the surrounding seawater.

Most people see the coral only by day, the thin veneer of overlying tissue lending colour to the otherwise white skeleton. By night though, with aid of artificial light, the "true" colours of the corals become apparent as the polyps expand to feed; a mass of colour that rivals any terrestrial garden.

The molluscs, like the fishes, have evolved a wide range of colours and patterns. The shell-less nusibranchs are perhaps the most brillianly patterned and coloured of all the molluscs. Their colours serve as a warning that they are toxic; their bodies possess glands that store irritant substances. The seashells — gastropods — are often strikingly marked, particularly the cowries. Normally such colouration would invite predation. However, virtually all the cowries are nocturnal and at night this color is hidden by their fleshy mantle that folds up over the shell. The mantle is usually a mottled patten that provides effective camouflage, further enhanced by the many protuberances on the mantle that disguise the outline of its arms to emulate a branching coral.

The colors of crusteceans tend to be primarily for camouflage. Small, transparent shrimp live amongst the tentacles of sea anemones and some corals, their lack of colour making them very difficult to see. Many small crabs and shrimps that live as commensals on other invertebrates such as sea fans, sea cucumbers and feather stars have evolved colours and patterns that perfectly merge with those of their host.

In many other reef vertebrates, the function of colour is simply not known. Although biologists can provide the "how" to many of the aspects of colour of the coral on the reef, the "why" so often remains elusive.

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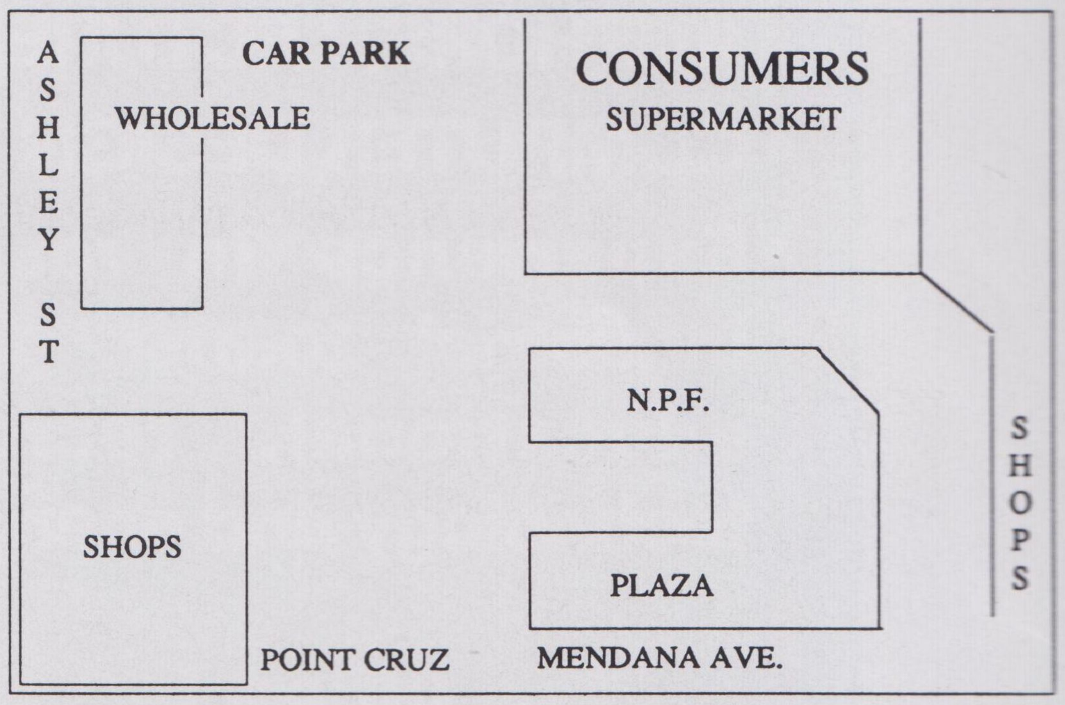
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